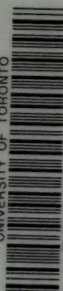



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00188335 4



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation







A HOME-HELP IN CANADA







Ella C. Sykes.



# A HOME-HELP IN CANADA

BY

ELLA C. SYKES

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH PERSIA ON A SIDE-SADDLE"  
"PERSIA AND ITS PEOPLE," ETC.

*WITH A PORTRAIT*

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1912

[All rights reserved]

125-922  
16/1/13



F  
5016  
.3  
S9

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.  
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to the many friends,  
British and Canadian, known and unknown,  
whose kindness speeded me on my way  
during my never-to-be-forgotten  
tour in the Dominion.*





## PREFACE

I WAS greatly impressed by a letter in *The Times*, that put in forcible words the hard lot of many of the million surplus women in the United Kingdom. It showed how the labour of educated women was too often a drug in the market, and how difficult—nay, often impossible—it was for a girl to earn enough to support herself comfortably and lay by for old age, and as a remedy for this state of things it mentioned the openings in the Overseas Dominions.

As the ideas in the letter appealed strongly to me, I resolved to go out to Canada in order to investigate what openings there might be in the Dominion for educated women. Shortly before I started, it was pointed out to me by a candid onlooker that I should gain far more information if I would go as a home-help for part of my tour, thus getting a practical insight into the conditions of life.

I confess that the idea was distasteful to me, for I had had little experience in the domestic arts,

though I had undergone some "roughing" when travelling in Persia, and had always been strong. But, as the answer to my objections was that "evidently I wished merely to dip my fingers into the water, and shirked taking a plunge that might be of real use to the women I wanted to assist," I decided to go, and am now deeply grateful for the somewhat unpalatable advice, as I have learned so much from having followed it.

This book is the plain, unvarnished record of what I saw during a six months' tour in 1911. Practically all my remarks apply to Western Canada, as my experiences were mostly limited to that part of the Dominion, and must not be regarded as typical of the Eastern provinces.

I wish it to be understood that, when writing of the five posts that I took as home-help, I have altered all the names of those with whom I came into contact, and have tried to conceal the localities in which they lived, being most anxious not to give offence in a land where I met with great kindness.

I was also careful to let it be known at the outset that I was simply a "temporary," and I always settled beforehand the duration of my engagements. But, so badly is the home-help needed in Canada, that

my services were only refused once or twice, by mistresses who most naturally wished to be "settled" with their domestics.

From first to last, none of my employers had any suspicion that I was under no necessity to earn my livelihood, and I trust that my investigations may prove useful to girls who wish to try their fortune in the Dominion.

My own experiences are unattractive, because I was an incompetent amateur, trained to do nothing properly that the country wanted. But I do not hesitate to say, that if I were obliged to earn my living, were proficient in some useful art, and knew what I know now, I should not hesitate for a moment between the wide, free life of Canada and my probable lot in overcrowded England !

It is well for a woman to know, in Canadian parlance, what she will be "up against" if she crosses the Atlantic, much of the literature treating of life in the Dominion being so roseate-hued that the fact that WORK, and usually very *hard* work, is the order of the day there, is sometimes ignored. The girl who is a failure in Great Britain will most certainly not be a success in the Dominion.

Canada is a Land of Opportunity for the young,

strong, and resourceful, who can cheerfully adapt themselves to entirely new conditions of life, in which they must divest themselves of many an English prejudice, and not object, for example, as one girl did, to the master of the house sitting at table in his shirt-sleeves !

9/1  
In order to succeed, a girl must be skilled in something that the country needs, such as teaching, stenography, dressmaking, poultry, or vegetable-raising, a knowledge of the domestic arts being absolutely essential. I do not recommend an educated woman to take up home-helping as a profession, save in certain districts, as that calling is too often only another name for maid-of-all-work or drudge, £5 a month being usually the highest salary for incessant work and little relaxation. But if she can cook, bake, and wash, a girl need never starve, and a few months of domestic work will not be time wasted, as she will learn the excellent Canadian methods of doing things, and, what is perhaps more important, the Canadian point of view, that will help her considerably when she starts on work more to her taste.

But she must not expect to receive wages and give nothing in return, somewhat in the spirit of a girl who wrote to me lately to inquire whether she could get a



post as home-help "where the woman of the house did all the hard work" !

Canadians are, as a rule, remarkably capable, and have "no use" for the incompetent, who will find the Dominion a hard country, with few to care whether they sink or swim.

I ardently desire that British women shall help to build up the Empire, and the sisters of the men who are doing such splendid pioneer work in the Dominion are surely fitted for the task.

But they must realise clearly what is demanded of them in a new country if they are to do their part worthily across the Atlantic.

E. C. S.

*Sept. 1912.*



# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE START FOR CANADA . . . .	I
II. SEEKING WORK AT WINNIPEG . . . .	18
III. MY FIRST POST AS A HOME-HELP . . . .	41
IV. TRAVEL THROUGH WOOD AND PRAIRIE . . . .	65
V. AT A WOMEN'S HOSTEL . . . .	88
VI. ON A DAIRY-FARM . . . .	108
VII. FROM CALGARY TO THE PACIFIC . . . .	130
VIII. LIFE ON A CHICKEN RANCH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA . . . . .	152
IX. MY THIRD POSITION AS HOME-HELP . . . .	171
X. A VISIT TO AN ALBERTA FARM . . . .	186
XI. AT WORK IN A TOWN . . . .	200
XII. OPENINGS IN CANADA FOR EDUCATED WOMEN . . . . .	222
XIII. ON THE PRAIRIE DURING THE HARVEST . . . .	243
XIV. EASTWARDS AND HOMEWARDS . . . .	284





## NOTE

By kind permission of the Colonial Intelligence League for Educated Women (Office, 36 Tavistock Place, W.C.), I have published a few extracts from the letters of girls who have gone out under its auspices, and to whom it has given valuable aid in finding work.

This Society aims at supplying reliable information to educated women wishing to take up work in our Overseas Dominions.

In Canada, its Representative at Victoria, British Columbia, helps them to get suitable posts, while various voluntary Committees in other parts of the Dominion undertake the same work.

As this book goes to press, the League is about to start a Settlement in British Columbia, in which women may be trained to the conditions of Canadian life before taking up land on their own account.



# A HOME-HELP IN CANADA

## CHAPTER I

### THE START FOR CANADA

It was towards the end of April when I left Euston for Canada, and I felt rather lonely at the idea of a six months' tour without any travelling companion, nor did I relish the thought of a second-class passage with its cramped cabin accommodation. A lively girl shared the railway compartment with me, a girl whose crowd of relatives engaged in seeing her off almost besieged the carriage; and though they prevented me from saying many last words to my own friends, yet the general effect of all the laughter and chat was certainly cheering.

When we boarded the fine *Empress* steamer, nearly five hundred passengers sorted themselves in the second class, and I hastened to find the cabin that had been allotted to me, being far from pleased when I discovered that it was on the lowest tier, lying

almost on the water-line. Though it had a porthole, yet I was not permitted to have it open, and as luggage was piled on the three other berths, I waited with some anxiety to see my fellow-passengers. Two nice-looking girls made their appearance shortly, and we "sized" each other up in the manner of women, the result being luckily favourable on both sides. A servant-girl of the "slavey" type, going out to her brother in Vancouver, was the fourth of the party, but she was such a trying room-mate when sea-sick, that after the first night the steward took pity upon us and removed her to another cabin.

With the exception of the closed porthole (a big exception to me), there was nothing whatever to complain of on board, as far as I was concerned. My cabin companions could not have been more considerate; and as we were all bad sailors, we had a good deal to test us during two days of enforced captivity in our berths—days that made us feel more like old friends than mere acquaintances.

Certainly no one could desire a nicer stewardess than the one who supplied us liberally with oranges during our sufferings, and sometimes the remarks of the steward to other passengers gave us food for amusement. He thoroughly disapproved of four

youths who occupied a cabin next to ours, and one rough day we heard him say to them :

“What, hungry again ! Why, you’ve just had bacon and eggs and bread and butter and tea for your breakfasts. If you’re hungry like that you ought to get up and go on deck ; you’ve no business to be lying here with such appetites.”

“I wonder whether we shall ever get upstairs again and enjoy ourselves ? ” said one of my room-mates plaintively, as the second day dragged its weary length to a close, and it seemed hardly likely, with the big vessel pitching and tossing and rolling as she was. But all things come to an end, and next day, fortified by salt baths, we struggled up on deck and began to make friends with our fellow-passengers. I came across one woman who was an excellent sailor, and she scoffed at the idea that we had had rough weather, remarking, “I never call it bad unless you stand on your head ! ” Everyone was in high spirits. Many were going to Canada for the first time, some having only the vaguest idea of what they intended to do when they got there ; but one and all were full of hope and optimism.

A young girl, who sat opposite to me at table, interested me considerably. She was quite alone, but had

a boundless confidence in her own capabilities, and was actually going right across the great continent to make a home in Vancouver for her parents and their other children. She had no introductions, and apparently not a single friend in the whole Dominion ; and not only did she intend to get work for herself as a stenographer, but she was commissioned to buy a house and get everything in readiness for the rest of her family, who would follow her in a year's time. There was a touch of the pathetic in the girl's absolute certainty that she would "make good" at once, and I wished that I could help her, but could only give her the address of the Y.W.C.A. (Young Women's Christian Association) in Vancouver, and impress upon her to put up there, or at some lodging approved of by the Society. I never saw her again, but I fancy that she was of the type that succeeds.

A middle-aged couple with a charming dog were pleasant acquaintances, and told me how they intended to make their fortunes in fruit-farming. I was certainly ignorant enough of such matters, but it occurred to me that people who had never done a day's manual work in the whole course of their lives, and who had no idea of the *theory*, much less of the *practice*, of fruit-farming, would be at a decided disadvantage ; and,



as it turned out afterwards, my presentiment was unfortunately true.

Canada is eminently the Land of Youth and Optimism, but it is also in very truth the Land of Work, and English people sometimes are apt to lose sight of this side of the shield. An old man, over seventy, with a young wife and several small children, was constantly patrolling the deck, and I was aghast when I was informed that he also was about to try his luck at fruit-farming. The Dominion is certainly no land for the old and weak; old-age pensions and workhouses do not exist, and there would probably be no charitable society to busy itself about this helpless-looking family. Though there are kindly hearts in plenty, yet Canadians are engrossed with their own affairs, and would probably be annoyed at such feckless folk coming out to a new country. Fortunately these were the exceptions, and the great majority of passengers on our crowded promenade-deck were young and vigorous. As there was a shortage of chairs, I usually went up early to secure seats for my room-mates and myself from the sailor who had charge of them; and if the men wanted to rest or read, they were obliged to do as best they could on the deck. But repose was not much in their line,

and all day long we had displays of skipping and "cock-fighting," and now and again there would be tugs-of-war with the first-class passengers, in which the latter were invariably beaten, to our unconcealed joy. It was a standing grievance with the second-class that the first-class passengers had such a liberal allowance of deck space, part of which they never used, while we were so crowded that there was barely room to walk about at all.

I spent much of my time in chatting with English people who were returning to the Dominion after a winter spent in the Old Country. "We could never live in England now, after having been in Canada," was the universal verdict; and again and again I heard the comment, "The life over there is so much bigger." An Englishman, who had been out some dozen years, pointed to his small boy with pride as a "real young Canadian"; but his wife gave me the first hint of the unceasing work that, as a rule, falls to the farmers' wives.

This is what she said to me one day as we sat together on deck:

"My husband (we weren't married then) wrote to me to come out to him at Winnipeg, as he had got a home for me at last, and I left my own people with

any amount of things for our new house, as Fred had told me how dear everything was across the Atlantic," and she laughed a little at the remembrance.

"Well, he met me all right, and we were married ; but before we went off to the prairie I had to do some shopping in Winnipeg, and I remember asking him what was the colour of our bedroom paper, as I wanted to get a toilet-set to match it. He didn't say much then, but I shall never forget my feelings when I found our new home was just a one-roomed wooden shack, divided in two with a curtain, and not papered at all ! It was an *awful* shock to me, I can tell you. Of course I couldn't unpack my boxes, and I found that I had to do the cooking and washing for three men besides my husband, and was left alone all day long. How I got through that first year I hardly know," and a wistful look came over her worn face. "After a time we had party after party putting up at our farm for the night, men, sometimes with their families, coming along the trail to take up homesteads, and some of them were dirty beyond words ! They left things behind them, and one day I found the house crawling—ugh !" and she shuddered with disgust. "It seemed to put the finishing touch to things, and I went to bed for a whole day, and cried

and cried, and just longed to talk it over with some woman who would understand and not laugh at me."

"Poor thing!" I murmured sympathetically, and she smiled brightly, and continued,

"Oh well, I saw that it was no use crying over spilt milk, and I must do the best I could, so next day I set to work and got the upper hand of those horrible insects after a time, though we were never rid of them entirely."

"But now that you are well off your life is much easier, isn't it?" I inquired, and was surprised when she shook her head.

"Do you know, I had less work when I began my married life as a poor woman than I have now," and at my exclamation she continued, "All these farmers have a perfect passion for getting more and more land. They will sacrifice everything to that, and the house and its comforts have to come last. My husband buys every acre he can get, and of course has to engage hired men to work his farms; and the more men there are, the more work it is for a woman to prepare three hot meat meals a day and do all the washing-up after them, not to speak of washing the clothes and keeping the house clean."



I began to understand, as I listened to her, that the great scarcity of women in Canada is the reason why a prosperous farmer's wife who could afford a trip to England with her husband and child thus complained of being overworked.

I also saw that a life such as she described would be far harder to an Englishwoman, fresh from a comfortable home, than to a Canadian, and I was confirmed in this when, later on, one of these latter told me that she loved the prairie, and was sorry to leave it when her husband got a good post in a town. "A woman on the prairie can help the men in so many ways," she said, "and my bread got to be the talk of the district. The men used always to be begging me to give them a loaf when I was baking."

There was a nice English girl on board, who had constituted herself protectress of two poor children, a boy and a girl, aged six and four respectively, going out under the care of the Canadian-Pacific Railway to their parents in Montana. Miss Roberts washed and dressed these waifs every morning, played games with them, and was quite a mother to them on board ship. She was on her way West to marry her "young man," who had written home for her to join him, and I hoped that she might have the good luck that

she so richly deserved. I used to amuse myself with a lively little boy, whose mother was a martyr to seasickness, feeling hopelessly ill even when the ocean was quite calm ; and one day she inquired where I had left my children, and was surprised to hear that I was single.

“ You always look so happy,” she said, “ that I felt sure you must be married.” This reasoning amused me, and I was more amused when she added, after a moment’s reflection, “ Perhaps you are so contented because you are free and can do what you like ? ” This remark reminds me that nearly every girl on board had her mind set on matrimony. Some acquaintances confided to me their hope of being married in Canada, where husbands were said to be a drug in the market ; and I got rather horrified to observe how free-and-easy became the relations of the men and maidens, the manners of girls who seemed at first to be “ pinks of propriety,” becoming what I imagine is the fashion in the servants’ hall. Our old coachman once told me that a man in his class could walk out with a girl for a year and no one would think anything of it, but if it came to “ waisting,” as he expressed it, this was a sign to all and sundry that the couple were engaged ! According to this theory



there should have been many betrothals on our vessel, as couples sat in the closest proximity, and embraces were occasionally exchanged in public. Much coal grit fell on the deck from the funnel, and this needed a good deal of male help if it got into a girl's eye. One young man on board was really most clever at curling the eyelid up over a match and then removing any irritating particle, and having watched him do this once or twice, I myself experimented later on during a railway journey with complete success on a little boy who had been suffering for some hours with an inflamed eye.

It got colder as we neared the land, and we had the excitement of icebergs in the distance; the air was like champagne, making me long to walk for miles, and infecting the men and boys to such an extent, that they tore about the deck chasing one another to the imminent danger of quiet passers-by. Everyone was as good-humoured as possible, and there was plenty of give and take—in fact, I never heard a cross word all the time I was on the vessel. Most of us were hazy as to our geography when the rugged coast-line of the Dominion hove in sight. Was that land Newfoundland or Nova Scotia? Were we to thread the straits of Belle Isle, and could that coast

be Anticosti? One night we were all roused by a fearful grinding sound as the ship tried to force her way through ice, and the sea was apparently one mass of floes and ice-hummocks next morning, a wonderful sight, and making me understand more fully the books on Arctic travel. In fact, so beset were we that our steamer had to back out and then turn, in order to find a channel of clear water, thus wasting many hours. Our steward told me that early in the morning he had observed seals on the floes, but there was no life of any kind visible when I made my appearance on deck. We were all afraid that we should be disembarked at Halifax, and it was a great relief later on to hear that we were heading for Quebec, and that night the pink sunset flushed the blocks of ice with which the sea was flecked, and showed us here and there a fishing-boat, boldly making its way along what seemed a perilous path, far from the long, grey, snow-flecked shores.

The last day on board was a mixture of excitement and fatigue. No deck-chairs were provided, so we tramped up and down more than usual, surveying the somewhat dreary snow-covered hills bordering the Gulf of St. Lawrence. All our boxes had been dragged upstairs and from the hold, and had been piled, one

above another, on the long side-decks in readiness for the Customs officials, and at Rimouski everyone hung over the side, eager to see these latter and the doctor and pilot come on board. From that moment we were all on our feet, either waiting in a long *queue* to be interviewed by the doctor, or making herculean efforts to get boxes to the front and opened for the inspection of the Customs officers. My cabin trunk was in a place easy of access, and I wished to engage the attention of one of the officials. "Don't have him on any account," said a man near me, who looked upon me as a friend, if not a relative, as he had just discovered from the name on my box that we were both called Sykes. "Why, he is the man who pulls out everything, and has been dreadful to all the first-class ladies." However, I decided to risk it, as I was anxious to have my things examined, and in a moment the official ferreted in my box and pulled out a toque. "How much had I paid for it? Was it new? Had I any new dresses?" I answered him truthfully, and was rather puzzled when he came upon a little box of cough-lozenges, which he opened and examined carefully. I could not imagine what he wanted, until he remarked, "The 'ad.' says these are good for tonsilitis. I was laid up for three months

in hospital with it last winter, and my throat is feeling rather bad to-day." "You are welcome to half the box," I replied, rather amused at his coolness. But he answered, "No, I will only take three," and slipping one into his mouth then and there, he departed. "Well, he does know how to make himself at home!" was the remark of my namesake, as I went off for my interview with the doctor, who by this time was not nearly so beset as at first.

"What is your name? Where are you going? Have you ever been to Canada before?" were all the questions asked of me, and I was given my paper, and later on returned to the luggage to see whether I could get my second box examined. It was in another part of the deck, and an interested bystander informed me that the official about to do it was a "regular little devil." Certainly he seemed in a rage, and the way he began to burrow in my trunk was by no means reassuring. "Is that new?" he demanded, as a white alpaca came to the top. "No, I have worn it for two seasons," was my answer. "Well, you *are* a careful dresser," was the retort, to the joy of the bystanders, some of whom were disagreeably inquisitive. I told him how many new dresses and hats were in the box, and he suddenly appeared to become con-



vinced of my good faith, and said half-shamefacedly, "Some of the ladies try to tip me and prevent me from doing my work. Often the best-looking ladies have the worst hearts." To this I made no reply, and to my surprise he waxed quite communicative, saying what a hard job this work was, and how he must be at it till midnight, and then have to begin again at six o'clock the next morning, until I felt quite sorry for him.

At last the lights of Quebec came into view (what a pity it was that we could not approach one of the most beautifully situated cities in the world by daylight!), and we of the second-class exchanged many good-byes. The first-class left the steamer before anyone else, and as we saw them getting off, a young man remarked to me bitterly, "That is one of the many privileges that first-class people have"; and I felt rather mean as I retorted, "Well, I suppose they have a right to it, as they pay for it."

Yes, money *does* make a difference, and as I drove off to the charming Hotel Frontenac in the darkness, I was delighted to think that I should have two or three days in comfort before I set to work as a home-help. Food, service, and all were excellent on board, but, being a bad sailor, I dislike the sea, and beyond

everything I thirsted to have the luxury of a room to myself, and not be present "at a party all day long," as a lady once described life on board ship.

I shall never forget my glimpse of Quebec. It was the end of April, and hot as summer, yet patches of snow lay about in corners. The views from the famous Dufferin Terrace were superb, a panorama to take one's breath away, with the St. Lawrence and Charles Rivers, and the historic island of Orleans, off which the English fleet once lay for so many months. It was delightful to wander up and down the streets of what looked like an old French provincial town, the illusion heightened by hearing French spoken on every side. Though several fine public buildings and the trams give an up-to-date air to the city, yet the massive walls and fortress-like gateways, the citadel and ramparts take one back to the days of the "Grand Monarque." The number of Roman Catholic churches and convents surprise the visitor, and the strong Roman Catholic element, I was told, bars progress in many directions. For example, if a good play or opera be performed in the city, it is no uncommon thing for the priests to find some fault with the work in question and to forbid their flock to patronise it, as in the case of *Carmen*, which was once [played



to a wellnigh empty house owing to clerical interference.

The climax of my visit was the time passed on the Heights of Abraham, where the column with its inscription, "Here died Wolfe victorious, Sept. 13th, 1759," brought vivid memories to my mind of a man who was the very incarnation of patriotism, and who won for us the great Dominion, on the threshold of which I was standing.

## CHAPTER II

### SEEKING WORK AT WINNIPEG

IT was early in May when I travelled from Montreal to Winnipeg in the luxury of the Pullman car, and about ten o'clock on the third night the negro porter deposited my grip and hold-all upon the platform, and I was asked by a couple of red-capped boys whether I were not going to the big Canadian-Pacific Hotel. "No," I replied, "but will you take my things to the Home of Welcome?" At this they made themselves scarce, and I heard afterwards that girls bound for the Home seldom gave them a tip, and this disagreeable experience accounted for their desertion. So I had to drag my belongings into the big waiting-room, crowded with men, until I captured another small boy, offering him a quarter (1s.) if he would help me, which he did somewhat reluctantly.

Apparently the nearest way to the Home was across many lines of rail, and I devoutly hoped that we should not be knocked down in the darkness by the trains that seemed to be running in all directions,

the perpetual clanging of their big engine-bells rather confusing than directing my steps.

At last we reached a frame-built house with a little verandah, and I was kindly received and shown upstairs to the one "single" room; for I had written to the Matron beforehand, saying that I was coming to Winnipeg in search of work, and would gladly pay extra for the privilege of a bedroom to myself. It was five dollars (£1) a week, including my board, the other inmates paying three and a half dollars, as they had to share rooms.

Next morning a dressing-bell clanged at half-past seven, but I was up half an hour earlier in order to avail myself of the bathroom undisturbed, and at eight o'clock descended to a breakfast of porridge, tea, toast, butter, and marmalade; on other mornings we had bacon, and sometimes salt fish. I found that my table-companions were mostly of the servant class, some rather rough members of society; but the Matron, whose kindness to me from first to last made my life in the Home almost pleasant, presided, and led the conversation with admirable tact. She interviewed me after the meal, and I wrote my name in her register, and explained that I wanted a post on the prairie as home-help, but that I was neither com-

petent nor experienced. She looked at me rather sadly as she said, "What a pity it is that Englishwomen are taught to do nothing properly," and I agreed with her most heartily. She did her best to help me, and I went to the Secretary of the Y.W.C.A., who advised me to put an "ad.," as they call it, into the most widely read newspaper. This I did, and worded it thus :

"Educated Englishwoman, inexperienced, wishes to assist mistress of farm in housework."

Besides this, a lady, one of those who are the world's helpers, was extraordinarily kind in trying to get me work suited to my limited capacity, and I studied the advertisements assiduously, but found that only general servants were required in the town, and that on the farms the mistresses demanded competence in baking, laundry, and dairy-work, not to speak of ordinary cooking and scrubbing.

One morning the Matron said that she had heard of a possible post for me, and I made my way to a neat wooden house in the city. A pleasant-faced, dishevelled woman, clad in a collarless blouse, and with her skirt sagging, opened the door and ushered me into a well-furnished parlour. She wished to engage me

for her sister, a mother of four children, and expecting her fifth to arrive shortly.

My work would be to cook, wash, and clean for the household, and keep an eye on the children, and for this, to me, herculean task I was offered only fifteen dollars (£3) a month, as I was inexperienced. The sister had been a Salvation Army captain, and had had to discharge her last help because she was always "running after the men"! I suppose my interviewer did not think that this would be my failing, for she urged me to accept the situation. "You are real strong," she said, "and if you will only launch right in you will have a lovely home." I knew my many limitations too well to venture to follow her advice, but we shook hands warmly at parting, and she called after me as I went down the street to change my mind and try!

As I walked back through the wide thoroughfares of hustling, bustling Winnipeg, I felt that Canada is a hard place for women who have brought out nothing that the country wants, and was depressed at my inability to cope with the circumstances in which I had placed myself, wondering, not for the first time, whether I were not a fool to have started on this absurd adventure. But it would not do to show



the white feather so early in the day, though the next posts offered to me, the one to be maid-of-all-work in a town doctor's family, and the other to be house-keeper to a bachelor, were not such as I could accept, and only increased my sense of failure.

The Home was not calculated to raise my spirits, and I felt ashamed of myself for criticising the food and the company of some of those who ate it with me. For one thing, I missed the fruit and vegetables to which I had always been accustomed—they are terribly dear in Winnipeg; I found the meat here and throughout Canada very tough, as a rule, and at first I disliked having tea with every meal. I would have drunk water gladly, but had been specially warned in England not to touch it in Winnipeg, though later on I did so, when I discovered that there was a patent filter of the most hygienic type screwed on to one of the taps in the kitchen. All the inmates of the Home would have to find other lodgings before long, as a big band of girl-immigrants was expected from England. These are lodged free for twenty-four hours, the Government subsidising the Home for that purpose, and fifty girls could be packed at a pinch into the big room at the top of the house. This Government grant (I could have taken advantage of



it myself) is occasionally abused, and I was told of a case in which a well-to-do Englishwoman and her two daughters actually got free board and lodging before proceeding on their way west !

I soon became friendly with several of the inmates of the Home, many of whom confided their affairs to me with the utmost frankness, and took a kindly interest in my hunt for work, being greatly surprised, however, that I wished to go on a farm, where the life was, so they said, far harder than in the towns. One delicate girl, who had been a book-keeper in England, and who had imagined that she was going to make her fortune in the Dominion, told me that she had had nothing but poor posts and overwork since she left her home. Her first place was in a shop, where she worked all day long at book-keeping, and at night slept in the store, in company with a bulldog that guarded the safe !

Another, who went out as a general servant, complained bitterly of a late mistress, who had belonged originally to Fanny Low's own class. This woman was in the habit of giving large dinner parties, and on one occasion, when the guests had departed and midnight had struck, she commanded her overworked "slavey" to scrub the kitchen floor. This order

made the proverbial worm "turn," and Fanny gave notice and at last got her release, but not before her health had been undermined.

③ Irish Biddy, whose hair was apparently never brushed, and whose brogue was so strong as to be almost unintelligible to me, seemed to be in a perpetual state of taking situations and throwing them up, when she would return to the hostel and indulge in floods of vituperation against the unfortunate woman who had had the ill-luck to engage her. Once I heard her say at table that she never quarrelled, but her opposite neighbour retorted immediately, "When you have a bad break on, Biddy, and begin to curse and swear, there's no one in the world that can put up with you." As I was informed on good authority that Biddy could not make toast properly, much less cook a potato, I felt sorry for her various employers. Many of the inmates of the hostel were fond of running down the Canadians, whom they looked upon as merciless taskmistresses, and apparently few of them wished to give a fair return for wages which certainly were double, if not treble, what they would have received in England. One reason for this antagonism was that British servants are usually specialists, and do not grasp that in Canada they must turn their hands to anything, and be cook, house-parlourmaid,

washerwoman, and perhaps baker and dairymaid all in one ; and another reason is that they have the haziest ideas as to the conditions of life that prevail in the Dominion.

One pretty English girl told me of her experiences. She had come out after reading some attractive literature about the good time that a home-help is supposed to have in the country, and on the voyage had hired herself to a farmer and his wife for the very small sum (as wages go here) of seven dollars (£1, 8s.) a month. Once they had got her on to the prairie they worked her all day, and gave her little, if any, relaxation. She had expected to have been taken drives with her employers, but they always went off without her, sometimes leaving her alone for two or three days with the hired men, and she was not really treated as one of the family. On one occasion she visited a friend on a neighbouring farm, and lost her way on the prairie, and would have been out all night if the barking of a dog had not guided her to a homestead, where the inmates, with true Canadian hospitality, put her up. When she got home the next day, she discovered that her employers had not made the slightest effort to find her, and having had enough of the way in which they scolded her if she did not do her work to their liking, she decided to leave.

But this she had great difficulty in doing, as the farmer and his wife asserted that she had promised to serve them for a year ; and though she stoutly denied this, she could hardly get away, and had even more trouble in obtaining the wages due to her. This experience is a rare one, Canadians being, as a rule, most kind to their employees ; but it shows how unwise it is for young girls to venture alone into a strange country instead of putting themselves under the protection of the societies that have been formed to help them, such as the British Women's Emigration Society, which sends out so good a stamp of girls, that the Matron told me that she only knew of two cases that had been real failures out of the hundreds with which she had had to do. Mary Black was, I fear, of rather too independent a character, for she refused to take a post that the Matron pressed upon her, and went off to a small hotel as waitress. Here she had to share a room with four others, two of the girls being Galicians of such unpleasant habits that she gave up the situation in a very short time, and was thankful to take the one that she had despised before.

But these were not the only inmates of the Home. Two charming Englishwomen, who had been governesses, and who had made up their minds to try their



fortune together in the Dominion, stayed here for a few days, and I shall not soon forget their radiant faces as they came to tell me that they had been engaged as waitresses at the Hudson Bay tea-rooms, where the Matron and I repaired next day to wish them good luck. The hours were not long ; they had installed themselves in a "rooming-house," and had all sorts of schemes for making money in various ways, plans which, I trust, have been carried out successfully by these brave-hearted women.

My sympathy was also roused by a young girl who had come out with a sister, a mere child about fifteen. The elder girl had acted and sung in public, and was most hopeful about getting work ; but, as she expressed it, "I must first settle Laura (the little sister) comfortably, and then I must find a place for Mother with a photographer, as she paints photographs, and will join us out here if I tell her that prospects are good."

"But can't your father help you, as he is in Winnipeg ?" I inquired.

"Oh, Father !" and young Eighteen laughed pathetically. "He's an artist, and you know what *that* means. If anything can be done here, I am the person to buckle-to and do it. Father can only just manage to keep himself going."



Both sisters started in a humble way as nursemaids, but I feel sure that the indomitable pluck of the elder girl will win a comfortable livelihood for them both, if not for the whole family, in the future.

One of the inmates of the Home interested me by giving me details of the way in which many of the British girls hurl themselves, as it were, into marriage.

They were in the habit of frequenting a matrimonial agency in the town, and some had actually gone all the way to Vancouver to marry men whom they had never seen; while others told her, without any appearance of shame, that they had left unsatisfactory husbands behind them in England, and intended to take fresh ones out here. One girl had great difficulty in her hunt for a husband. Her advertisements met with no success, but finally the agency provided a man, and the couple were to meet for the first time at the church where the marriage ceremony would take place. "Milly," said my informant, "had no roof to her mouth, had a figure like a bolster tied in half, and a limp. When the couple saw one another at the church door, the girl stepped forward and said, 'Milly Smith is my name.' 'Mine is Walker,' replied he, and off he walked in a great hurry, without another word, and she isn't married yet!"

This anecdote reminds me of what a girl at the hostel said to me one day. "Before I came out to Canada," she remarked, "I read that I should find a number of men on Winnipeg platform waiting to propose to us girls, but, would you believe it, when I got out of the train not a single man even spoke to me?" and her voice trembled with mortification. Of course, this business-like way of looking upon marriage seems horrible, but yet I saw things in rather a different light when girl after girl assured me that she had no idea of what she was in for when she came out to the Dominion, and that she had never known the real meaning of the word "work" until she got there. Canada is a hard nut for a woman to crack unless she be strong and self-reliant. It is a ruthless land for the weak and incompetent, and to such as these the idea of having a man to fend for them must be well-nigh irresistible, while to be ill in a strange city, without friends or money, and where hospital accommodation must be paid for, would try the nerve of the strongest.

Winnipeg, the third city of the Dominion, is bright and bustling, full of movement along the immensely wide thoroughfares of Main Street and Portage Avenue, with tramcars constantly running and crowds

for ever passing, the great majority being young men. Here, as in the other towns of the West, save Victoria, I noticed an almost entire absence of old people, and wondered whether the strenuous life of this Land of Youth was too much for them. Everything goes hey presto ! Here funerals pass at a smart trot, and I could hardly keep up with the brisk pace at which the choirs led the psalms and hymns in the churches.

✓ The greatest grain market of the American continent is a kind of melting-pot of many nationalities, the inhabitants of fifty countries being represented in the Dominion. The British and Scandinavians are perhaps the most in evidence, but there are many French, Germans, Spaniards, Italians, and Galicians, and all of these will in a few years probably regard Canada as their motherland.

Side by side with the handsome public buildings and the numerous palatial-looking banks and big stores are small frame-built shops that must inevitably be swept away before long. There are excellent tram-services, and one notices many good horses, the majority well-fed and groomed, but too often driven with the cruel bearing-rein. Winnipeg has its parks and theatres, but the chief places of amusement seem

to be the cinematograph halls, with such attractive titles as "Dreamland" and "Starland," and I saw far too many drinking saloons. Despite their presence, I hardly ever came across a drunken man. Once I was somewhat persecuted by one when I was writing in a hotel, and in consequence retreated to the "parlour." However, my enemy found out my refuge, but when I said sternly, "This is the ladies' room, you must not come here," he replied at once, "A' right, I good fellow; I turn out," and off he went, and did not reappear.

The Post Office was always thronged with people waiting for their letters, standing opposite pigeon-holes marked A-E, and so on, or opening little private boxes and taking out their correspondence. One day, as I stood in the long *queue*, a pleasant-faced old gentleman bowed to me to take his place. I demurred with a smile, but he insisted, with the words, "I come from a country where the ladies go first; in Canada they go last!" To the latter part of this remark I must take exception, for I was never made to go "last" from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back, and not once did I have to hoist my belongings in or out of any railway car, meeting with the utmost kindness again and again.



He went on to inquire what I was doing in Winnipeg, and was quite distressed to hear that I was looking for a situation as home-help, but said that he could perhaps assist me by giving me an introduction to some clergyman, a friend of his. I did not feel inclined to respond to this offer, and thought that the incident was closed; but a few days later I came across the Englishman again, who put me to the blush by urging me to write to him for help were I hard up at any time—in fact, I had considerable difficulty in impressing upon him the fact that I was by no means penniless.

“I know an educated woman when I see one,” he said, “and I feel that you are throwing yourself away as a home-help.”

I longed to tell my good-hearted acquaintance that I was under no compulsion to earn my livelihood, but I feared to trust my secret to anyone, and, holding out my hand in farewell, I assured him that I was all right. “Do you think you will come through?” and there was real concern in his voice. “I am perfectly sure that I shall,” was my answer, and I went my way considerably cheered by one of the most genuine bits of kindness that I have ever encountered.

It was curious how completely I had now merged



myself into my part. It was no longer acting. I knew the despairing feeling of hunting for work and finding none, and I had a pang of disappointment as girl after girl went off to her post, and I, the incompetent, was left behind without one. I filled up time with washing my clothes, thus learning the use of a wringer and a washing-board, and the right way to hang the garments on the line, and was humiliated to find that I did everything in the wrong way if I followed the light vouchsafed to me by Nature ; and I also helped to clear the table after meals and assist with the drying of the many cups and plates.

Part of my long delay in getting work was owing to the fact that the newspaper had twice omitted to put my "ad." into its columns, through some negligence, and thus I was twice thrown back, as it were. I was urged to take a post as telephone girl, where a salary is paid and teaching given at the same time, and also would I not be a waitress ? In each case, even if I had not determined to go on the prairie, the stuffy, overheated atmosphere of the offices and hotels would have strongly repelled me ; and in all probability I should have been "fired " the next day, as I heard again and again that English waitresses are looked upon as too slow, and are speedily hustled out of

their posts by the alert Canadians, who seem to do their work with lightning speed.

One day I found a letter in my "ad." box to the effect that if I would call at such or such an office I should hear of a "position" (they never speak of situation) to suit me. Accordingly I went, and was interviewed by a burly Canadian, who did not trouble to rise from his seat or remove his hat as I entered. "Mother is old and past her work," he began, "and she wants a strong girl to take over things. My father has a whole section, and there would be him and my brother and the two hired men to 'do' for, and you would have to milk three cows and make butter." "As well as do all the cooking, bread-making, and washing?" I inquired. "Yep, it's a good bit of work," was the answer, and I declined the post with thanks.

On 14th May there was a procession in Winnipeg to commemorate the Fish Creek and Batoche engagements, in which the Red River Rising was put down. A column opposite the Town Hall marks these victories, and from here the bands, with detachments of different corps, marched by. And then came the veterans. All the men who had fought against Riel strode past in their Sunday best, but wore slouch felt

hats with red bands and a couple of small brown ostrich tips. Each man carried a bunch of flowers, mostly carnations, and this reminded me that the Matron had told me that that day was called "Mother Sunday," and it was incumbent on all to wear a flower and to write to his or her mother, were she in the land of the living, the preachers alluding to this custom in their sermons. In some newspaper I read a letter in which it was urged that a Sunday ought to be devoted to the remembrance of the *fathers*, but I do not think that the idea met with much acceptance. After the men, two or three bands of well-set-up Boy Scouts passed by, the whole procession on its way to St. John's cemetery to lay flowers on the graves of the dead heroes; and there was much excitement when the nurse, who had been at Winnipeg during the Rising, drove past, a striking figure in her garb of red with voluminous white head-gear. As I watched the procession, I entered into conversation with an elderly Englishwoman who stood beside me, and who had been twenty-seven years in Winnipeg, during the infancy of the city living in a tent on the site of the present big Canadian-Pacific Station. "I nearly broke my heart at first," she said, "things were 'fierce,' and often we had only bread to eat. My husband was a

carpenter, but sometimes had no work except sawing wood, and I did the men's washing. Think of it! There were Indians all round us, and they used to shoot wild-duck where the Town Hall stands."

"Do you want to go back to England?" I inquired.

"Oh, dear no. I love Canada, and wouldn't live in the Old Country for anything, for *here* we all have money in our pockets, and over there we couldn't make a living." Yet she bore no love towards the Canadians, asserting that they looked down upon the English, and she launched into a long account of the slights inflicted upon her by her next-door neighbour. "She was always rude to me until her daughter was married, and then she came and begged me to help with the wedding. Can you believe it? None of them knew how to clean a fowl! They would have cooked 'em, insides and all, if I hadn't been there," and she laughed with much enjoyment. "And then there was the wash. My neighbour said one day that she couldn't imagine how I got my clothes to look so white, and I answered her, 'You Canadians are like the ducks; you just dip your linen in and out of the water, and expect the sun to do the cleaning for you.' And now we are the best of friends," she wound up, the whole conversation leaving me with the im-



pression that the much-resented attitude of superiority was not on the part of the *Canadian* woman !

Not far from where we stood were the Government Immigrant Halls, over which I was taken one morning. Here 450 immigrants can be accommodated at a pinch, and they are given free lodging for seven days, during which they are helped to get work. The whole place was a miracle of good management. In the rooms the beds were one above another as on board ship, and could be chained up against the wall. They were provided with wire and fibre mattresses, the latter being destroyed at intervals for the sake of cleanliness, and the immigrants supplied their own blankets. There were baths and rows of washing-basins, with hot and cold water laid on ; on each floor was a kitchen with stoves and a *batterie de cuisine* ; there was a laundry for the women, a hospital, an office where the immigrants could leave their possessions while roaming about the city in search of work, and the whole building was warmed with steam-heat. I was greatly impressed with the good sense and kindly thought of all the arrangements, which must be a priceless boon to men and women seeking their fortunes in a new country.

At last I heard of a post that seemed within my



capabilities, but I urged my would-be employer to meet me before I closed with her, and went to a rendezvous at a stable at which she had put up after driving into Winnipeg. She was a pleasant-faced little woman, and her letters to me had been nice, though vague. So I began to ask for a few details. "You said, when you wrote," I remarked, "that your family consisted of yourself and your husband." "Sure," was her reply, and then she hesitated for a moment. "Well, I think I ought to tell you," she went on, "that my father-in-law of eighty-two lives with us; but he is hale and hearty, and will turn the handle of the washing-machine on Mondays. Then there is my brother-in-law and our hired man, and"—here she made quite a long pause—"there is my sister-in-law." "Oh, I suppose she would help with the work?" I put in, feeling rather depressed at this category. "Well, she might, perhaps, do something, but she isn't like other girls—not *mad*, oh no, but just queer and odd." She assured me that all her neighbours considered her situation to be an ideal one as regarded the work; but when she spoke of the thirty pounds of butter that it was "up to me" to make each week, the chickens that I must "lay down" before long, and the addition to her family that she

expected in July, my heart failed me. I explained that I lacked the necessary experience to wash, bake, and cook for four men and as many women, for she intended to engage a nurse to look after her in a month or six weeks' time. And yet I was so anxious to get a situation, that I nearly closed with my would-be employer to stay with her for two or three months at ten dollars (£2) a month, though the programme of work would have staggered even an English "general." But I had another string to my bow, so telling her of this, and that I would clinch the matter by writing to her on the Monday, as I could not come out to her by the mail-cart until the Tuesday, we separated, and a wire from my other "string" met me as I turned into the newspaper office. It was from a widow on a prairie farm, who did her own work and needed a companion. As I felt that I could honestly undertake this post, I accepted at once for a month, wrote to decline the other situation, and on 22nd May departed for my first venture. Though I left the Home with joy, as the fortnight I had spent there had been a very long one, yet it was with no little regret that I said good-bye to the Matron, whose constant kindness and that of her friend had meant much to me. Everybody congratulated me on getting a con-

genial "position," and it was with an exciting sense of seeking my fortune that I left the station with its great clanging engines, beside which our English ones look like toys, and set off for the goal of my desires, a farm on the prairie.

## CHAPTER III

### MY FIRST POST AS A HOME-HELP

THE day got hot as the morning wore on, and I could have wished that the occupants of the crowded "first-class" car had not been so indifferent to the charms of fresh air. A young Scotch mechanic, who shared my seat, opened my window, propped it up for me as the catch would not work, and entered into conversation as the train passed through a prettily wooded part of the prairie. He informed me that he had left Scotland fourteen years ago, and had revisited his home after serving through the Boer War; and on my inquiry as to which country he preferred, he replied, in a strain that reminded me a little of Kipling's "Chant Pagan." "I wouldn't *live* in the Old Country again for anything," he concluded. "It was all so small when I went back, and it made me laugh to see the ridiculous little fenced-in fields no bigger than our gardens out here"; and he glanced at the magnificent sweep of the prairie as it rolled towards a far horizon.

When the train stopped at his station, he said "Well then?" as a farewell salutation, and grasped the hand of the home-help, in whose prospects he had taken a frank interest; and so we parted in friendly fashion.

When I reached my destination some hours later, Mrs. Robinson's man was nowhere to be seen, so I was advised to enter a kind of 'bus, that jolted and bumped its occupants over a road more like a ploughed field than anything else. Its goal was a grey-painted wooden hotel, where finally a shock-headed youth driving a buckboard made his appearance, and I was jolted back again to the station for my trunk.

Here a difficulty arose. The baggage-room was locked, and a bystander informed me that the station-master was having his tea, and that I should disturb him at my peril. My informant added that he himself wanted to get his boxes out of that room, as he had a drive of five-and-twenty miles before him, yet he would not venture to brave the baggage agent's wrath. It was certainly a shame to disturb the poor man at his meal, but, as I had some distance to go, I summoned up my courage and knocked at his door, which in a moment or two was flung open violently. I poured out profuse apologies before the irate-looking official who appeared on the threshold could say a



word, and, as a result, not only was my trunk produced in a jiffy, but the stationmaster himself helped it on to the buckboard, and we parted the best of friends.

It was a lovely evening as my taciturn young driver and I started off to my future home. The prairie was undulating, with bluffs covered with poplar and wild cherry, and here and there reedy "sloughs," as they call them, alive with wild-duck. I had a sense of adventure as mile after mile separated me farther and farther from the railway, yet there was always an uneasy feeling that perhaps I might not please my new employer, and very probably would not be considered worth even the small salary of £2 a month. The silent yokel who drove me had been three years in Canada, but my questions as to how the Dominion compared with his old home in the North of England elicited the shortest and most reluctant of replies.

At last we reached a nice-looking wooden house, surrounded by a little garden, and a pleasant-faced lady came out, warmly welcomed and embraced me, and then led me into a spotlessly clean and well-appointed abode. I felt that I was indeed fortunate in my first venture, and enjoyed supper, which was graced by my driver and his brother in their shirt-sleeves. Mrs. Robinson then helped me to wash

up the supper things, showed me to a prettily furnished bedroom opposite to her own, and promised to call me about six o'clock on the morrow. I had given her a reference, kindly furnished by the Honorary Secretary of the British Women's Emigration Society, but she declined to read it, saying that "one look at my face" was quite sufficient for her, so I felt that my new life had begun under flattering auspices.

Next day it was a curious experience to dress hastily and descend to the kitchen to help my mistress with the preparation of porridge and fried bacon for breakfast, and at half-past six the two youths appeared with pails of new milk, and tidied themselves for the meal. In the wooden lean-to, answering to the scullery, was a basin of water, and into this they plunged their heads and hands, and came dripping into the kitchen to dry themselves with the roller-towel hung on the door. They then combed their hair with the aid of a small mirror on the wall, and sat down, waiting for me to serve them with porridge out of the saucepan—excellent fare when accompanied by milk fresh from the cow. They never thought of lending a hand as I passed them the jug, cut the bread, changed their plates, placed the dish of bacon on the table, and handed them the tea poured out by my employer,

eating my own meal in the pauses of waiting. I confess that it went somewhat against the grain to wait on them in this manner, and I had to remember that they had been up early milking and feeding the animals, and therefore deserved a good meal. As soon as they had finished, they swung out of the kitchen and off to their work of "seeding," while I rolled up the sleeves of my apron and donned a pair of indiarubber gloves for the wash-up.

Even this apparently simple operation has a right and a wrong way of tackling it, and of course I took the wrong way by putting a mixed assortment of crockery and silver into the pan. My mistress now showed me how to wash the cups and saucers first, then the silver, then the greasy plates, the knives receiving attention last of all, everything being piled on a tray to drain, and scalded with boiling water from the kettle in order to facilitate the drying operations, plate-racks being unknown on the prairie. After this the washing-cloth must be rinsed out (in many places a little mop is used), and I was implored never to use the dish-cloths for opening the oven door or for handling pots and pans. This was a lesson hard of learning, as they hung invitingly from the line, and the legitimate rag was never to be found when

wanted, while I soon learnt from painful experience that every part of the stove was capable of inflicting a burn upon bare hands.

The washing over I went upstairs to do the rooms, but the way in which I made my own bed met with disapproval. The usual English manner of arranging the pillows was stigmatised as "most untidy," and I was shown how to place them in an upright position, Canadian fashion, and lean against them an elaborate pillow-sham, with the words "good-morning" and "good-night" embroidered on opposite sides of it.

We then descended to the "shed," as Mrs. Robinson called the scullery, and my employer churned a mass of cream, but would not permit me to assist her, as she was sure that I should "make myself in a terrible mess" if I did so—probably quite true, but humiliating. I was set to peel potatoes, to prepare rhubarb for pies, and to draw water from the well just outside the back door. To do this last job I had to let down a large milking-pail by means of a strap, and had hauled up two or three bucketsful when a catastrophe occurred. Presumably I had not fastened the strap properly, but anyhow the pail vanished down the well, disappearing with a resounding splash as it reached the



water! I uttered a cry of despair that brought Mrs. Robinson out in a trice, and though she must have felt much vexed, yet she behaved nobly, and said that Jack and Harry had already lost two buckets in this way, and mine made the third; but she would persuade them to descend with a ladder and retrieve the whole lot, and meanwhile we must do the best we could with a very inferior pail. I felt most grateful to her for her forbearance, and later on, when the midday meal was ready, we strolled to the barn and found two fascinating colts eagerly awaiting their mothers, that were at work; and I cannot describe the neighing and whinnying that took place when the two teams at last came in (in Canada a pair of horses is always called a team), the mares wild with impatience to get to their little ones.

Dinner consisted of fried bacon, for the second time that day—it is the staple food on most farms—and we had a milk-pudding for “dessert,” as Canadians call the second course. Tea, as is the custom throughout the Dominion, was served at every meal, and at first I got very tired of it, and used to supply myself with hot water from the stove close at hand, to the surprise of the others.

“Have you got ‘nerves’ that you won’t take



tea ? " Mrs. Robinson inquired, with a scarcely veiled contempt.

" No, not yet," was my answer, " but I don't want to have them."

Later on I took tea like everyone else, and got accustomed to it, though I always reverted to cold water whenever I could be sure that it was safe to drink it. At one farm, when I asked whether the water was good, I was not particularly reassured by the answer, " Well, I can't quite say, but I have never heard of anyone getting typhoid from it."

Mrs. Robinson, not content with tea three times a day, partook of it during the morning, and again at four o'clock, and I told her frankly that this indulgence partly accounted for the frequent attacks of " nerves " to which she was subject.

I still remember how tired I felt that first day, and how glad I was when my mistress said that I could  
× do what I liked till four o'clock, as she herself always took " forty winks " during the afternoon. I lay down for half an hour, and then intended to go for a walk, but hardly had my head touched the pillow when I was sound asleep, and never awoke until I was roused by Mrs. Robinson at half-past four. She was kindness itself, and had lit the stove and made

her afternoon tea, making me feel ashamed at having performed my duties so badly, and firmly resolved to do better in the future. In England I was usually looked upon as capable, but here at every moment it was borne in upon me that I was very much the reverse, and this gave me a humiliating feeling of being out of my element.

Next day I descended to the kitchen full of energy, though the floods of rain coming down in a veritable torrent had a depressing effect. The local butcher, his wife, and a friend were expected to dinner, so we had a busy morning cleaning the dining-room (we ourselves always ate in the kitchen), getting out the best glass, china, silver, and cutlery, and sweeping the drawing-room, only used on state occasions.

Mrs. Robinson thought that her guests would hardly venture on a twelve-mile drive in such a deluge, but preparations had to be made all the same. Clad in macintosh and rubbers, I drew water from the well, got cream and butter from the little dairy, only a stone's-throw from the house, and did my best at chopping wood for the fire, which needed constant replenishing, no coal being used in this part of Canada, and which went out in the most aggravating way if left for only half an hour to its own devices.

At last all was ready ; the beef was cooking in the oven, the potatoes put on to boil, the table laid in the dining-room, and we could go upstairs to attire ourselves. To my surprise the guests actually arrived, driving up in an open buggy, from which they emerged in a half-drowned condition, and we helped them off with their dripping wraps, which we hung up to dry in the little kitchen. When all were seated at table I had my first experience as a parlour-maid, carrying in the soup, the meat, the rhubarb-pie, and tea, and changing and clearing away the plates and dishes. I could have laughed as I waited on the company, so entirely did I seem to have changed my identity, and I sat at table and ate during the intervals of serving. The guests were most kind to me, and seemed anxious to know how I liked Canada, and whether I intended to settle in the country, saying that they thought I was very brave to "pull up stakes" and come by myself so far from home ! In my turn I asked the butcher, who led the conversation with much *aplomb*, how long it was since he had left England. "Thirty years ago, and I've never gone back again and never want to," was the uncompromising answer. During the meal the guests discussed a sad case that had occurred in the neighbourhood during the previous

year. A farmer, in a small way, had hurt his arm, and the doctor prescribed a linseed poultice for the wound, but owing to gross carelessness the druggist gave the man "bed-bug" poison by mistake, and the victim, after enduring agonies of pain, was obliged to have the limb amputated.

During his illness his wife tried to help with the farm-work, and one day while driving the "mower" she stopped to talk to a neighbour, dismounting from her seat and omitting to put the catch on to the machine. The horses began to move as she was getting back, with the result that her leg was so terribly gashed by the knives that she was permanently lamed, and one of the problems of the neighbourhood was how best to assist the "poor Cripples," as they were called, for unless they could work their land they would have no means of subsistence. x

When dinner was over the women came into the kitchen, and, in the friendly Canadian fashion, helped me with the big wash-up; I then kept a watchful eye upon the tiresome stove, and at four o'clock carried tea and cakes into the dining-room. Mrs. Robinson had expected that her guests would have stayed to the half-past six repast, but to my relief they departed just before, shaking hands warmly with the



home-help, and inviting her to visit them in their own homes.

It seemed a day devoted entirely to preparing meals, and hardly was the buggy out of sight than we had to hurry to get supper ready for Jack and Harry.

That night a coolness arose between my employer and myself. The rain had ceased, but the air was damp, and she wished me to sleep with my bedroom window shut in case her lace curtains should get draggled. This I declined to do, as fresh air is a necessity to me, and, moreover, the room was small and had no fire-place. Though I offered to close the wooden jalousies she took my refusal in bad part, and next morning, when the young men had gone off to their work, she gave me my *congé*, saying that she was dismissing me for incompetence in laundry-work ; and I now learnt by practical experience the Canadian custom of " firing " an employee without any previous warning. Though it was humiliating to be turned off at a day's notice, when I had intended to stay for a month, yet I was not altogether sorry, as the life was almost entirely an indoor one, quite different to what I had imagined existence to be on a prairie farm, and the " daily round " was beginning to bore me considerably. I said pleasantly that I would go



whenever she liked, and she then asked me to stay for a week, and straightway had a nervous attack, which turned my feeling of irritation into pity. Poor woman! The monotony of her life, combined with no outdoor exercise and too much strong tea, was ruining her health. Her chief amusement during the ten days I was with her was to have daily chats with her neighbours on the 'phone, this distraction having its drawbacks, as some of the farmers' wives were mean enough to listen to conversations not intended for them, and Mrs. Robinson told me that she could often hear the click, as some woman took up her own "receiver" to overhear what was perhaps being spoken in confidence. The whole circle of farms was on the same telephone line, so the house was alive with calls at all hours, rather a difference from the unbroken calm that is popularly supposed to brood over the prairie. The ladies exchanged the local bits of gossip, and most of them appeared to "enjoy bad health," a thing that seemed strange to me when I was standing outside the house and drinking in the glorious prairie air. The pity of it is that the women have far too little of it, as they confine themselves to their hot kitchens, and many hardly leave the house at all during the long, severe winter. Mrs. Robinson told

me that she was indoors last winter for over a month at a time, and it was far too cold to open the windows! On the prairie there are no sash-cords, so the windows have to be pushed up from the bottom and kept open by means of a stick, and it is usually impossible to push them down a few inches at the top and thus air the rooms, overheated by the furnace in the cellar.

Certainly the Dominion has no room for idlers. A farmer's wife who rode past one afternoon said that she had had to milk eight cows before having any breakfast that morning, and felt "rotten"; and Mrs. Robinson told me that all her friends would give anything to be able to hire some capable "girl" to help them, as they were getting on in life, and the strain of the long years of drudgery was beginning to tell upon them. The only servants obtainable seemed to be Galicians, who do not appear to be very pleasant inmates of a house, and, moreover, the farmers round here were apparently far from wealthy. But, of course, there is a good deal in being accustomed to the work. One nice small boy, belonging to a neighbouring farm, told me that he had to milk six cows every day, and had begun at the age of seven, but that his father's hired man could never learn the art, even though my young friend had given him instruction.

Mrs. Robinson herself was not overworked, but she had lost the habit of repose, and was never quiet for a moment. Not only did she sweep out the whole kitchen and "shed," and shake all the carpets after every meal, but she would ply the broom in between times, when apparently it was entirely unnecessary—in fact, she was for ever goaded by a malignant demon of unrest. Unluckily for her she had no outdoor tastes, and was so nervous that she could not drive herself; and as the youths were fully occupied with working the land, she had to stay at home for lack of a charioteer, and never went farther afield than the fowl-house. Here, and apparently all over the prairie, there are terrible "electric" storms at intervals, and Mrs. Robinson had many tales of men and horses being struck by lightning, while the extremes of heat and cold must be very trying to English people until they get acclimatised to them. Though it was May, yet the winds were bitterly cold, and on the 27th of that month I awoke to a world covered in snow. All the trees were bowed down with it, and the house seemed quite dark, so thickly filled with flying flakes was the air, and in spite of waterproof and galoshes, I found that my visits to the dairy, the well, or the wood-pile were fraught with much discomfort.

My poor mistress had had a bad night, and was full of complaints as to Jack's surliness and his unwillingness to take any advice from her. Certainly it is a mistake for a woman to run a farm with hired help, unless she is thoroughly conversant with all the details of the work, which Mrs. Robinson was not.

This, of course, Jack knew perfectly well, and would listen to no suggestions from his employer; but as he was honest, capable, and sober she did not wish to dismiss him, for she had once had a disagreeable experience with a hired man who turned out to be a drunkard, and she asked me whether I could say a "word in season" to her factotum and his brother.

Personally, I had no cause to complain of either of my fellow-labourers, though their table manners were a trial to me until I had firmly resolved not to notice them. They were worthy young fellows enough, and after a day or two Harry never failed to greet me with a smile and a cheery "Can I 'elp you?" This readiness to oblige was most useful, for he got me wood and water, saving me many times from going out in the rain or snow to the well or wood-pile. Mrs. Robinson informed me that her last lady-help used to romp with the youths, and in consequence they were ready to do anything for her; but my different methods



appeared to answer well enough, for when my employer was laid up for a couple of days, and I had to prepare the meals unaided, I found the stove lit when I came down in the morning, and the kettle filled with water. They were always ready to find fun in the merest trifles, and any antic of the elderly cat would send them into fits of bucolic laughter.

I did my best to say a good word for Mrs. Robinson, but it was a delicate matter, and when Jack made no comment on my remarks, and Harry only vouchsafed a "She's so silly about things," I felt that my well-meant intervention had probably made matters rather worse. To my suggestion that they should tell the "missus" when she reappeared that they were glad she was better, their uncompromising "But we ain't" left me in a painful confusion.

As the time for me to leave drew nearer, my employer liked me better and better, and said that she would miss my "bright face dreadfully," and now and again she dropped me a word of praise on the performance of the household "chores." One day, as I was scrubbing the back staircase, she exclaimed, "What a terrible come-down your mother would think it could she see you now!"

"I consider it a great come-up," I retorted with a



laugh, and felt quite proud when she said later on that the stairs had seldom looked whiter.

We had always cakes or scones for tea, and I learnt here the excellent and speedy Canadian method of measuring flour, sugar, butter, &c. by the cup, and small quantities by the table- and tea-spoon : I never saw weighing-scales throughout my tour, but at first found it difficult to translate the pounds and ounces of my English recipes into " cups " and spoonsful.

On Saturday we had a general clean-up. I washed with soap and water the shabby linoleum that covered the kitchen floor, and the smart dining-room linoleum was cleansed with skim milk, that gave it a wonderful polish ; the drawing-room, a repository of countless knick-knacks, had to be dusted, and the carpet-cleaner diligently used here and in the bedrooms. The work tired me hardly at all when I got into it, and my chief concern was the fear that my hands would become permanently blackened from the cleaning of dirty saucepans, while the many washing operations made my nails terribly brittle.

The kitchen floor was partly covered with loose pieces of carpet that I was for ever displacing at first, arousing my employer's ire and caustic remarks about my " shuffling tread." One length went from

the "shed" to the kitchen table, and there was a piece laid down for the feet of each youth, an attention that they much disliked; but I suppose it was easier to shake the mud off bits of carpet than to remove it from the linoleum. The pots and pans were kept in the "shed," and here it was that I scraped out the porridge saucepan every morning, a tiresome task anyhow; and as it had two holes that were stopped up with scraps of calico, it behoved me to be careful not to pull these out during my cleansing operations.

The kitchen table was covered with white oilcloth, and on it Mrs. Robinson mixed her dough for bread and pastry, without the aid of a board; but for meals we had a tablecloth, that the boys speedily soiled, owing to the uncivilised way in which they ate their food, and I should have infinitely preferred the oilcloth unadorned.

I had a hot position with my back to the stove, in which there was one large oven in the middle, and on the right a boiler that it was my task to keep filled from the rain-water tank at the back-door. Above the stove was a receptacle in which plates and dishes could be kept hot, and on either side hung a collection of pots and pans. The big block-tin kettle was king of the kitchen, and it behoved me to be

careful of it, as when on the boil the steam from its spout was capable of inflicting a bad burn, as I discovered to my cost.

During the days of rain it was most difficult to keep the fire alight with the damp wood, and we had recourse to drying the logs in the oven ; and when the weather suddenly got hot, the kitchen was a veritable Black Hole of Calcutta, and the hateful house-fly and mosquito began to annoy.

Sometimes I used to wonder whether it were indeed I who was cleaning out rooms on my hands and knees, or rubbing clothes on the washing-board, or ironing, or replenishing that voracious stove with pieces of wood. I must confess that though I gave my whole mind to my work, yet I found the life very monotonous, and it was hard at first to be ordered about, and not to be mistress of my own time. Mrs. Robinson and I had a curious kind of friendship. She liked me personally, invited me cordially to visit her later on, confided in me, and begged me to correspond with her, and yet she not unnaturally hated the amateur way in which I set about my work, and made me feel that I did nothing right and was thoroughly incapable.

But my depression vanished when I awoke up one morning to feel a warm wind blowing and to see the

snow melting fast. The birds were all singing, and a wren was actually building its nest in the pocket of an old coat of Jack's that he had left hanging outside. The trail had been so bad on account of the snow that perforce I had stayed two or three days longer than my week, and now that the roads were drying I made a personal appeal to Jack to drive me to the station the next day, for I knew that he and Harry would miss me, and I had a lurking fear that he might tell Mrs. Robinson that it was impossible for me to leave for the present, in order to prolong my stay.

We had quite an excitement on my last evening, as I persuaded one of the boys to go down the well and make an effort to retrieve the three lost buckets. This he accomplished finally with the aid of a rake, tied on to a long clothes-prop, and I alternately watched his efforts, which seemed to be attended with considerable risk, and gazed at the young moon and stars in a wonderful sunset sky, and at the long line of prairie, purple as the sea where it lay on the horizon.

And now the time for my departure had arrived. Mrs. Robinson had a meeting of the "Women's Auxiliary," a charitable society, at her house that afternoon, and came up three times to my room as I was finishing my packing, to urge me to come down,



as "the ladies all want to see you." When she paid me my wages she gave me a little homily on the subject of untidiness in my work, saying that she was speaking for my good, and that I must improve if I intended to be a success in my next situation ; but she tempered her severity with a word of commendation of my willingness, and said that I had learnt a good deal while with her. I listened in a humble silence, and did not "answer back," though I wished that she could have understood with what an immense effort I had earned the money that she handed to me !

At last the buckboard made its appearance. I bade farewell to sunny-faced Harry, who said, "Let us hear how you get on," as he wrung my hand ; and Mrs. Robinson embraced me, gave me a little souvenir, and was genuinely sorry to say good-bye to me. The colts insisted on accompanying their mothers, and impeded our progress a good deal, one of them soon beginning to lag behind ; but Jack had no pity for it, and rather cruelly remarked, "It would come though it wasn't wanted, and so it must just take the consequences."

I was delighted to be off after ten days of indoor life, during which my horizon had been practically bounded by the well and the wood-pile, and I enjoyed



even the roughness of the track. "It will jolt your bones up a bit," as Jack truly said, and I had to plant my feet firmly on my "grip," lest it should be shot out, and keep an eye on my trunk fastened on behind.

But jolts and bumps were a trifle when one was drinking in the intoxicating air. Summer had come with a rush. The grass was starred with purple and white violets, tiny wallflowers, pansies, and dainty stitchwort; grasshoppers were chirruping loudly, and the frogs ("peepers," Harry called them) were croaking in a jubilant chorus from every pond we passed. The air was full of down from the poplars, a kind of summer snow; small yellow canaries (I heard later on that they came from Florida) flitted about, and there were orioles, blue-birds, and wild-duck.

Everything was so full of life and freedom that I was quite sorry to reach the little prairie station and bid farewell to my driver. He shook hands with me warmly, saying that he hoped all would go well with me, and when I thanked him for having been kind and helpful, he blushed up like a girl, but looked pleased in his rather boorish way. "Don't go to Canadians in your next place, they know too much," was his parting advice, words that showed me that

he had not been unobservant of my numerous deficiencies.

I had made my first venture, and though I had been a failure, yet I knew that I had got more or less into Canadian ways, and should probably succeed better in my next situation. My mistress had shown me much kindness, and I saw by the light of later experiences that I had had a very easy place with her, which only my lack of training prevented me from filling properly.

The fine air had made me feel very fit, and capable of doing double the work that I could have accomplished in England, but all the same I had a conviction, that only strengthened as the months went on, that the post of home-help is not a suitable opening for an educated woman, unless in some specially selected district, where she can live in conditions more akin to those of which I had read before I came out to the Dominion.

## CHAPTER IV

### TRAVEL THROUGH WOOD AND PRAIRIE

IN my efforts to investigate openings for educated women, I travelled from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back again by the Canadian-Pacific line, the familiar C.P.R., that one hears spoken of so constantly that I used to say that it was something like the S.P.Q.R. of old Rome. My ticket was called "first class," but it only entitled me to a seat in a long car with a passage down the centre, and with little room for hand-baggage if it chanced to be crowded.

Accordingly, if I made night journeys I took a berth in the Pullman, and went in luxury, being, moreover, entitled to sit in the fine Observation car at the end of the train, a sort of glass coach with a platform outside, from which one could see the often marvelously beautiful panorama.

On any short day-journey, such as from Toronto or Montreal to Quebec, the Pullman can be exchanged for the Parlour car, where each passenger has a comfortable revolving arm-chair. These two are the real

first-class accommodation, and the Tourist car (almost equally comfortable, though not as elaborately upholstered) is the second, while the Colonist or Émigrant car, often crammed with Russians, Poles, Galicians, Swedes, and Italians, is distinctly for third-class passengers.

The huge engines make our English ones look almost like toys by comparison, and the long carriages, raised high above the platforms, have only an entrance at each end, and are approached by steps. I was always haunted by the fear that the train might glide off if I wandered far from these steps during any halt at a station, for the conductor merely calls out "All aboard!" and even as he utters the words the train begins to move.

My first long journey was from Montreal to Winnipeg. I had tried to interest some of the ladies of the former city in my work, but the general opinion was that the sexes were too evenly divided in Eastern Canada for there to be much scope for Englishwomen, except as domestic servants, though I got much encouragement from the Principal of the Victoria College.

It was a two nights' run from Montreal to Winnipeg, and when I got into the Pullman I was interested in seeing the negro porters making up the beds for the

night. Each passenger has a plush-covered section to himself, a section that would accommodate four people seated opposite to one another, and these seats are pulled out till they meet, and a broad shelf above them is brought forward to serve as the top berth. From this latter, mattresses, blankets, and green curtains are produced, and the porter sallies out to a particular cupboard and returns with spotlessly clean sheets and pillow-cases. I always engaged a lower berth, as a ladder is needed to ascend to the top one, and likewise to descend; and I was careful to see that my window was drawn up, and a gauze-filled frame, some six inches high, inserted into the aperture in order to ensure fresh air during the night. The green curtains were hung from a rail in order to screen the occupants of both berths, but as I disliked being at the mercy of the upper berth, I always insisted on a second curtain of some thin material being hung on a cord to the shelf just above my head, and thus being entirely under my own control.

I found the negro porters very civil, but an American lady from the Southern States on one occasion sharply reprimanded one because he asked, "What do you say?" to a question of hers that he had not grasped.

She was annoyed with me because I declined to be drawn into the controversy, and told me in rather a



pointed way an anecdote of an old negress, once a slave, who had found her way into Canada. "How do you like this country, Matilda?" her former master inquired. "You aren't ordered about here as you were down South." "Oh no," was the reply, "it's only gentlemen and ladies who know how to do that, not this white trash!"

Personally, I generally slept well in the Pullman, though when men snored heavily and children cried it was not always easy to abstract oneself. Dressing in the morning was also a trial, as a mere slip of a room, with two basins (towels in plenty), and no fastening on the door, was all the accommodation provided. It was almost impossible to dress if three or four ladies wished to accomplish this feat at the same time, and consequently I would either get up early, or make the major part of my toilet in my berth, though it was no easy task to do my hair in a space in which I could not sit upright! In fact, I was almost moved to envy by the example of one old lady, whose snowy *coiffure* was most elaborately waved and puffed and curled. She was going right across to Vancouver, a five days' journey, and told a passenger that she had had her hair arranged on the day of the start, and that she would not touch it until she reached her destination.

The meals served in the restaurant car were ex-

cellent, though somewhat expensive, and as here and at every good-sized hotel throughout Canada the waiters expect to be tipped at every meal (the scale was 5*d.* to 1*s.*), money, I found, ran away swiftly. In the Tourist and Colonist cars there are stoves, &c., for cooking food, so that their occupants can save considerably by bringing provisions with them. The big parties of girls that the British Women's Emigration Society sends out in charge of matrons, travel in what are called "stripped" Tourist cars. Each girl has to buy a straw-filled mattress, pillow, and blankets, most of the articles being useful to her afterwards, and the matron lays in provisions for the long train journey—hams, tinned meat, bread, cake, condensed cream, and so on. These "protected" parties are a great boon to inexperienced girls of whatever class, as they are preserved from undesirable acquaintances on board ship, and are looked after, together with their belongings, until they reach their final destination.

At Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg are hostels, where all women immigrants are given free board and lodging for twenty-four hours, and are helped by the matrons in charge to find work if they elect to stop in these cities.

As railway porters are conspicuous by their absence

in Canada, everyone must be able to carry his own hand-baggage, and I found that a flat suit-case, which held my night-things, a book, and writing materials was most useful. A woman travelling alone is always the object of kindly attention, and never once did I lift my "grip" in or out of any train, some passenger invariably possessing himself of it and leaving me free to clamber up or down the steps of my carriage—in fact, so well was I looked after that I feared that I must give the impression of being rather helpless. There is always a good deal of movement in the cars. Men come round with newspapers, post cards, magazines, fruit, and sweets; the conductor wishes to inspect your ticket, and often takes it away, giving a slip of card in exchange, which he sticks into the hat-band of all the men; and the brakesman passes to and fro constantly, wearing thick gloves.

On my arrival in Canada I was struck by the fact that most men appeared to do their work in gloves. Perhaps the reason is that they are obliged to protect their hands during the intense cold of winter, and so get into the habit. Be that as it may, I was always surprised to see men riding, driving, or using pickaxe and shovel with gloved hands, and in the men's department of the drapers' shops there were immense piles of these handgear.

The "check" system for luggage is what I was accustomed to from Continental travel, and usually it works splendidly. Once I lost a box for two or three days during the height of the tourist season, and on another occasion I had a good deal of bother about retrieving an errant trunk. This was, perhaps, partly my own fault. I travelled with two boxes—one, old and shabby, held my "home-help" possessions, and this I kept with me; while the other, containing smarter clothes, was either sent on ahead, or left at the station until I required it. On one occasion I left this box for over a month, and it was finally traced to the unclaimed baggage department at Winnipeg, the baggage-agent exerting himself nobly on my behalf, sending constant wires, and assuring me that he would leave no stone unturned to recover my lost property, the check for which I had in my possession.

Travelling in Canada is very pleasant, because fellow-passengers soon become friendly with one another, and I never took a journey without getting information of some kind from all sorts and conditions of men. From Montreal to Winnipeg I was fortunate enough to fall in with an American traveller and author, well known in Canada for her explorations among the Rockies. We walked and talked and had our meals together during the two days I was with her, and as



both of us loved travel and had heard the "call of the wild," we had plenty of subjects of conversation as we watched the scenery from the Observation car. It seemed a land all lake and river. The big trees had been cut down, and were replaced by an after-growth of fir and alder, crowded together ; boulders were sprinkled about everywhere, and masses of grey rock cropped out. There were no high mountains, but it was a hilly country, with many a mile of muskeg or morass, and reminded me of parts of Scotland, though here the myriads of rushing streams were not brown but black, this colour being supposed to come from the roots of the firs, and, instead of the familiar heather, the ground was carpeted with young shoots of the blueberry.

There were few signs of habitation to be seen as the train sped along the well-laid track, but at one tiny station a picturesque family emerged from the Colonist car, the father and little son in leather fur-trimmed coats and fur caps, while the mother wore a much-embroidered scarlet dress. They were young and strong, but behind them staggered a white-haired old woman, with a sack loaded with her belongings on her bent back, poor soul, and looking very unfit to be starting life in a new country. Here and there was a small wood-built town with an air of being pitched down anyhow, or a cluster of houses with makeshift



trails to pass for roads, and now and again a desolate-looking log-cabin, a sight that always gave me a pang of possibly misplaced sympathy for its lonely occupant. Noble lakes, fringed with trees that grew to the water's edge and dotted with wooded islands, were dreams of beauty, and usually there was no trace that any human being had ever intruded on their centuries of privacy, though occasionally I noticed cut logs floating down the rivers, sign-manual of the lumberman's activity. It was a country to which Service's lines might apply :

"But can't you hear the wild ? it's calling you.  
 Let us probe the silent places . . .  
 Let us journey to a lonely land I know,  
 There's a whisper on the night-wind, there's a star  
     a-gleam to guide us,  
 And the wild is calling, calling . . . let us go."

I was sorry to part with my charming travelling companion when we reached Winnipeg, having no idea that not many weeks would elapse before I came across her again at Edmonton, just as she and her party were about to set off "on the trail." We were both of us interviewed in that city, and were amused at the newspaper article, in which her achievements in the Rockies and the objects of my tour, together with my travels in the East, were described in carefully balanced alternate paragraphs.

A month later, when I had left my first post as home-help, my box and I were deposited on the platform of a little prairie station to await the arrival of the daily train. So tiny was the station that it apparently boasted of no official, and I wondered how I was going to "check" my luggage. Two girls walking up and down examined the trunk, and finally told me that it ought to have a label with its destination inscribed thereon, otherwise it would certainly go astray. I thanked them, but said that I had no labels, as I had been told that with the excellent checking system they were quite unnecessary.

"Oh no, that is a mistake. We *always* tie tags to our boxes," cried the girls in chorus. "But there is Mr. Bright coming; I am sure that he will tell you what to do if you will ask him."

Terrified at the idea of losing my belongings, I hastened towards a man who came up at this moment, and laid my case before him. He threw himself into the breach immediately, said he would procure a label from his own house, and returned in a few minutes with one and a piece of string. I felt most grateful, and we walked up and down, talking of the Old Country, which he had never seen, until the train arrived, when he helped me in and told the conductor about my trunk. I mention this

little episode, only one out of many, to illustrate the innate kindliness of the Canadians. x

It was an interesting journey to my destination, Edmonton, as new prairie land was being opened up all along the line. I could see men ploughing the first furrows of their homesteads, or building the lumber shack that was to replace the tent close by, and I felt the splendid vitality of it all, and rejoiced to think that my own race was still at its work of empire-building, a work that had begun with great Elizabeth. Men in grey slouch-hats were on the platforms at every station, or lounged in front of the grey-painted wooden hotel, near which were rows of gaily coloured agricultural implements, a bright spot in the landscape. Everyone seemed to be poor, and my eyes invariably went to the few women, who often dressed with a pathetic attempt to follow the fashion, and these nearly always looked thin and worn. Yes, pioneer work is fine work, but it exacts a heavy toll from the women, because they are almost everywhere in the minority, and few of them compared favourably with the lean, sinewy, fit-looking men. I fancy that want of fresh air during the long winter must account for a good deal of this, and often the mosquitoes and flies are such a curse, that even in the summer the women venture out very little. Then the isolation

must be taken into account, and the fondness for too much, and too strong, tea plays its malignant part, in company with monotonous and incessant work.

I travelled for some hours with a pretty English girl who was going as teacher to a remote prairie school. Her journey was a tedious one, as when she left the train she would have a long wait for her connection, and after that would have a drive of fifteen miles to her post. She had no idea where she was going to board, and my heart misgave me when she said that she was about to teach Canadian children without any experience beyond what she had gained in England. It was no good to tell her that she should have gone through a short course in Canada, which would have been of the greatest help to her. Probably she knew it as well as I did ; anyhow, it was too late in the day to give her the information. Brave as she was, she felt depressed when we shook hands at parting, and I wished her all success in her venture. But I think that Fate will deal kindly with her, because she was so plucky and so determined to " make good."

On my way I was obliged to stop for a night at Yorkton and another at Saskatoon, as my trains were not particularly amenable. The first place appeared to be merely one half-made street, and certainly



would never have ranked as a town in Europe, but the life and stir of progress were unmistakable. I descended among a group of men, rough-looking in appearance, one of whom took my "grip" and hold-all in charge, remarking, "Go on ahead, the hotel is just past the Hudson Bay Store." I obeyed his directions, followed a wooden side-walk, and found a substantial-looking building with the hall full of men, many of whom were being shaved. The clerk behind his counter was busily chewing gum, and when I asked for a room he made no answer, but simply pushed a book forward in which I wrote my name. "Want sup?" he then condescended to inquire. "Yes, I should like some food, please."

"In there," was his laconic reply, as he jerked his thumb backwards over his shoulder in the direction of an open door. I entered the dining-room, where a waitress thrust the menu in front of me with a "stand and deliver" air on her impassive face, and I was served with canned salmon, beef with canned tomatoes, and Indian corn, canned pineapple, and a cup of coffee sickly sweet, as the milk was canned like everything else. I ate the food, however, with relish, as it was nice to have a meal which I had not helped to prepare, and which would involve no "wash-up" afterwards.

When I emerged into the hall the clerk called out,



"Lady," (I wonder he didn't say "Woman!"), "room 11," and the man who had taken over my belongings at the station advanced, cap on head and cigarette in mouth.

"Come right along, and I'll fix you up," he remarked, with a pleasant smile, and he carried my things upstairs, lit my gas, and promised to call me at 5 A.M. the next morning.

Certainly, if people go out "West" they must not expect the deference to be found in old civilisations, and in one hotel the conduct of the bell-boy, aged fourteen, amused me not a little. He came into the "parlour" to make up the fire, and at some remark of mine he left his work, took possession of a "rocker" near me, and swung himself to and fro as he talked. "This hotel is not used to bell-boys," he began, "and they arrange our hours very badly. The other boy and I have been talking things over, and if they don't give us more time off we have made up our minds to resign." I hope that the manager shivered at this ultimatum! The same youth, a thoroughly nice little fellow, when he received a small *douceur* from me at parting, remarked, "Good-bye, Miss Sykes; I hope you will have a most successful journey."

This specimen of young Canada was only one among many, and all these sturdy, independent offshoots of

the Old Country are the right stuff to build up the Overseas Dominions. I was very far from agreeing with an Englishwoman, travelling in Canada, to whom I narrated this small anecdote, thinking that it would make her smile, and was taken aback at her comment, "How dreadful! Such conduct is quite anarchical!"

On another occasion, two small C.P.R. red-capped boys accompanied me and my taxi to the hotel, into which they carried my belongings with more zeal than discretion, one boy whisking my hold-all through the door to the imminent danger of the protruding umbrella handles. I made no remark, but he turned to me with the curious apology, "I'm thankful they are all right, for you would have killed me if I had smashed them up!"

I had been warned before I left England that Canadians resented "frills," by which term they denote airs of superiority, more than anything else, and I bore this advice in mind throughout my tour. I was somewhat taken aback once in the baggage-room of a large station, for when the railway employees saw my name painted on the lid of my box, one of them called out, "Hi! Dick, come here! Your relative has just arrived from the Old Country," and a pleasant-faced young man was reluctantly dragged forward.

With admirable tact he lifted his cap, and said with a polite smile that he was "pleased to meet me" (the usual formula of greeting), and I smiled in return for lack of a suitable reply. But my attitude, I fancy, must have been correct, as the baggage-agents began at once to give me advice as to how to dispose of my second trunk in the cheapest possible way.

When I left Yorkton, a little crowd was gathered on the platform to speed the departure of a couple of Boy Scouts who had been selected to go to the Coronation, and later on, at Calgary, there was a fine muster of Scouts and Scoutmasters, who paraded outside the Cathedral to the strains of the town band, and then attended the service, after which a sermon was preached to wish them God-speed. In stirring words it was impressed upon the lads that they must do their utmost to uphold the honour of the Dominion in the Old Country, and as I looked at the rows of eager young faces, it seemed to me that the founder of the movement had called into being a new order of chivalry that would go far to neutralise the dangers of materialism and the worship of mammon.

My run from Yorkton to Saskatoon, and again on to Edmonton, filled me with exultation. When I

had left the wooded country behind, we emerged on to a vast expanse, Kipling's

“ . . . far-flung fenceless prairie  
Where the quick cloud-shadows trail,”

and which reminded me of the Persian Desert in its infinity, its distant horizon, and its air of mystery.

But there is an enormous difference between the two. The desert, with its wastes of rolling sand, might well stand for a symbol of Death, while the boundless prairie, with a soil only waiting for the plough in order that it may supply food for millions, is an emblem of Life. The keen tonic air that blows across the desert and the prairie, filling those who breathe it with the *joie de vivre*, and making them almost insensible to fatigue, is practically the same, and converts the Oriental traveller and the Canadian into optimists of the first water. Even the horses and cattle, galloping with outstretched tails as the train passed, and the colts and calves, gambolling in a pretended fright, were influenced by this Elixir of Life ; and how much more so were the human beings, who had to contend with countless difficulties in their conquest of this enormous wheat-field, 900 by 300 miles, and said to be the largest in the world. When I made the journey, many a station was marked by



a red-painted C.P.R. horse-box converted into a couple of rooms, and here and there little colonies seemed to be living in disused cars. At Leslie, "quite a place," as a fellow-traveller remarked, there was some kind of a fête on, and a big party left the train, most of the women bearing babies or leading small children, and I felt that one of the crying needs of Canada was for more women to come out to assist their overworked pioneer sisters. It must be quite an event for these lonely women to visit some little town (every cluster of houses in Canada is a town, if it is not a city), even if it only has a road or two like a section of a ploughed field, with a few wooden houses of all sizes and designs and colours planted here and there, apparently at haphazard, along it.

Whenever I think of Saskatoon there always comes into my mind the picture of a motor containing a young man and a woman. It came full tilt along a deeply rutted track, bumping up and down in a way that would have shaken the machinery of any well-conducted English car to pieces, and rushing with an apparently reckless disregard of consequences into the main street of the town. I cannot quite say why, but, as I watched its progress, I felt almost as if it were a manifestation of Saskatoon itself, an embodiment of the splendid life and energy that seemed to



vibrate through the whole city, and I was sorry that the kind deaconess, to whom I had a letter of introduction, said that there was not much opening for educated women in this "live wire," as I heard it called. But when I left the next day, and drove over the Saskatchewan River, through a hilly district which promises to become the residential part of the city, and made my way with many a jolt and bump to the station at South Saskatoon, three miles off, it seemed to me that the centre of some of the best wheat country in the whole Dominion could not fail to need the services of capable women at no very distant date.

Again I passed little towns in embryo, houses apparently pitched down anywhere, many only containing a single room; and there were frequent lakes with alkali-covered shores, the water of which was useless. And at all these tiny outposts of civilisation my heart warmed to see the Union Jack flying over the schoolhouse. A Canadian farmer's wife delighted me by saying that the children were carefully instructed in the meaning of the flag, and that her small boy was terribly upset when the symbol of empire on his school had to be taken down to be repaired, as he thought some disaster would certainly occur.

I ruffled another woman by commenting adversely on the "gum-chewing" habit.

"It depends entirely on *how* it's done," she remarked very stiffly ; but when she saw that I had no wish to offend, she condescended to give me some information about this curious custom.

She said that it was supposed to be good for the digestion, a very different theory from that of a revivalist preacher, who held up a long stick of this flavoured wax at one of his discourses and denounced it as a "root of all disease"! I was also interested to learn that it could be munched practically for ever without diminishing in bulk, and was amused at the tale of a small child whom the school-teacher forced to eject the "gum" that she was chewing surreptitiously during school hours. When the cherished possession was confiscated, the little girl burst into floods of tears, sobbing out that the stuff didn't belong to her, but had been "loaned her" by one of the other pupils! She also told me the curious fact that, owing to the intense dryness on the prairie, glass tumblers, both in winter and summer, would now and again crack with a noise like the report of a pistol.

As is usual in Canada, all the passengers were friendly with one another, and I enjoyed the journey, though the crying, bickering, and constant movement of several children did not add to the general harmony. But before I reached Edmonton a touch of tragedy

came upon the scene. An old and a young woman with two small children got into the car, and the young woman found a place opposite to me, and soon began to tell me a sad little history. The children's father, a blacksmith, had ridden an untamed and blindfolded horse in some races on Victoria Day, as the holiday of May 24th is named, and the animal, mad with fright, had pitched its rider on to a fence, where he had sustained fatal injuries. His old mother and children were going to bid him farewell in the hospital, where the poor wife was nursing her husband, and the kindly neighbour had decided to accompany the desolate little party to Edmonton, and begged me to excuse the lack of finish in her toilet. "I just got the news in the middle of my work, and, as I am their nearest neighbour, I pitched on any old thing and came right along, and my husband must 'bach'<sup>1</sup> until I get home again," was the way in which she spoke of her truly Christian act.

A friend, a well-known Canadian traveller, author, and lecturer—alas, now passed away—had given me excellent introductions to the ladies of Edmonton, who with the Deputy Minister of Education and the editor of the chief paper were all most kind and helpful, and I learnt much in this finely situated city,

<sup>1</sup> Live as a bachelor, and do all his cooking.

which seems certain to double, or even quadruple, itself in the next few years, as the Peace River district opens out.

What struck me most in the broad Jasper Avenue was the fact that half the offices appeared to be for the sale of "real estate," with "snap" building-lots temptingly advertised; and I did not wonder when I was told that all the world dabbles in "real estate," even servant-girls putting their savings into a building-lot, which they expect to sell in a year or two for double or treble what they gave for it. In the streets or on the cars the men seemed to talk of nothing but "lots" and "deals," and hundreds of youths will throw up any steady occupation and open offices wherein to start this fascinating, but in many cases risky, game. This passion, which, after all, is often only gambling under another name, has infected the scholastic profession, making it difficult to get nearly enough teachers to staff the Government schools—in fact, so great is the deficit from this, among other causes, that the province of Alberta alone has a shortage of two hundred annually.

After three busy and enjoyable days in Edmonton, I felt that I must set to work again, and I left the city in a 'bus, that took me down the high bank of the river to a bridge, which we crossed, and then up an

equally steep wooded bank on the other side, which, as at Saskatoon, was being turned into a residential quarter. Then came a stretch over the prairie to Strathcona, a town in the make, and where was the C.P.R. Station.

It poured in sheets the whole day, so that I did not much appreciate the pretty wooded country, which after awhile changed to miles of flat prairie, and then low hills, somewhat like our English downs, came into view, and I was at Calgary, where I was about to try and earn my living for the second time.



## CHAPTER V

### AT A WOMEN'S HOSTEL

WHENEVER I left a situation in Canada I had to hunt about for a fresh one, and every time it was borne in upon me that I was too much of an amateur to turn my hand to anything, save being a home-help.

I hope that my college education might have assisted me had I entered the lists as a school-teacher, but I cannot be sure even of that, as I was told that mathematics were a *sine qua non*, and that science has always been my vulnerable point. Moreover, to teach some eight or ten children of varying ages in a prairie school would have been by no means to my taste, nor could I take such a post and drop it at the end of a month; and governesses are seldom needed in a land where all send their children to the public schools to be educated together. Though I had learnt to type, yet I found that that accomplishment was useless, unless accompanied by a knowledge of shorthand, and, as I had no dexterity in any manual art, I was fain perforce to be a home-help.

There are, of course, dangers when a woman has to

get work through advertisements, and, whenever possible, I applied first to the Y.W.C.A., which acts as an employment bureau as well as a hostel. Usually, however, I had to fend for myself and judge of a situation by the letter in response to my notice, in which I always put that I wished to assist the *mistress* of ranch or farm.

The following was one of my answers :

"Dear Madam," it ran, "I seen your 'ad.' in the *Province*. I have 100 and 20 acres of my hone, it is all payed for I lost my wife 4 years ago I ham 36 years of age I have horses and cattle and a lot of chicken would you cair to go in Pardners with me as I want to settle down again. Pleas let me know by return mail."

I wondered how many "ads." he would answer before he found any woman willing to "go in Pardners" with him !

When I emerged on to the platform at Calgary, I was told by a blue-clad nurse, who met me at the station, that the Y.W.C.A., to which I had written, was full, but that I could be taken in at the Women's Hostel. Here the Matron received me most kindly, and gave me a nice room, which I shared with a lady who was considerate in every way, and I paid £1 a

week for my board and lodging. I went at once to the newspaper office to insert my advertisement, and then to the Y.W.C.A. to see if I could get work. The only thing that the Secretary had on her books was the post of general servant in a house where the wife was ill, and there were four children, and the Matron of my hostel offered me a situation twenty-nine miles from the railway and among a Mormon community! As neither of these posts attracted me, I went to an employment bureau in the town, where two men, seated, with their hats on and their hands in their pockets, surveyed me as I stated my needs, and the "boss" said that he was sure that he could find something to suit me if I would call again. "Take a drop in the morning" was his quaint expression. On my way home I saw a notice in a confectioner's shop that a girl was wanted as a waitress, so I went in, and asked to see the manager. A good-looking woman smiled as I somewhat abruptly started proceedings by saying, "I am not a girl, and I have no experience in waiting, but you would find me strong and willing."

"Everyone must have a first day," she answered pleasantly, and went into details of hours and wages.

"Will you try me for a week, as a temporary?" I asked. To this she demurred, saying that I should

be nearly a week getting into the work, and it would not do at all if I left directly I had mastered it.

Would I promise to stay the whole summer? This I could not engage myself to do, as during my six months' tour I was anxious to have as varied an experience as possible. So I was reluctantly obliged to give up the idea.

While I was seeking work, I went about Calgary with one or another of the inmates of the hostel. The town is situated, as it were, in a cup on the banks of the Bow River, and rolling downs rise around it, while across the river is Mount Pleasant, from which fine views of the Rockies may be obtained, and where are some of the best residences. There are no trees save near the water, and as it was piping hot when I was there in June, I often wished that there had been some public garden in the city in which we could have sat in the shade. It seemed a pity that no provision had been made for a park while the town was in embryo, but I suppose everyone was too busy buying and selling building-lots to think of reserving a few for the benefit of the public. I was told that at first the smallest coin used was a quarter (1s.), and even now it is an expensive city, the vegetables and fruit in the shops being at a premium. The streets were full of men, who loafed in big groups

round the hotels, and as one passed, the talk seemed all of "real estate," of "deals" and "building-lots," while the post office seemed a haunt of the idle, who lounged, smoked, and spat, despite placards sternly forbidding all these practices.

It was an extremely easy town in which to find one's way about. Down the middle ran the long Centre Street, from which branched off to east and west the avenues (aves they are called), numbered first, second, third, and so on, these being crossed by the streets that were parallel with Centre Street.

The "moving picture" shows were the chief amusement here, as in most Canadian towns, and the only theatrical performance that I witnessed was a lurid melodrama, but better, anyhow, than a play dramatising the exploits of the notorious Crippen, which was widely advertised in a large city that I visited, the posters being most repulsive.

Some of the shops had quaint notices—"Hospital for sick clothes" on one, clothes for "nifty" men on another, and a bike for sale was "a snap for spot cash"; while there were "shine" parlours for blacking boots, and dental, optic, and even undertakers' parlours. Wedding licences were to be obtained at the jewellers' shops—a convenient arrangement, as the ring could be bought at the same time—and I



was surprised to see that linen or calico was called muslin, there being frequent sales of "under-muslins."

The new Town Hall was an imposing stone building with a clock-tower, but the big rooms were too low for my taste. A gentleman, who had kindly constituted himself our guide, took us to the basement, where I saw, to my horror, prisoners in iron cages, shut in like animals, and seated on iron bedsteads bare of any covering. The sight haunted me for days, and I was thankful that our conductor inquired, before leading us to their quarters, whether we should like to see the women prisoners. "Oh no, not for anything, poor creatures!" we answered in chorus, hastily, and were relieved to be in the open air again.

On another occasion we had the curiosity to attend a "faith-healing" service held in a big tent. Here the so-called "doctor" expounded a doctrine that sounded queer and garbled to my ears, interspersing his remarks with anecdotes, most of which bore little on the points in question. The climax of the meeting was when men and women came forward to be healed, kneeling in front of him, and answering in the affirmative to his question, "Do you love God?"

He then anointed the afflicted part with oil, praying that this brother or sister might be cured of sciatica, deafness, or paralysis, as the case might be; and

then came the parting benediction, "Now, brother, you are plumb-healed if you will only believe it," and off the patient walked. During the next few days the papers were full of testimonies from men and women who had been cured by this treatment, but I wished that I could have made a personal visit—for example, to the boy suffering from a badly injured eye, from which the "doctor" removed the bandage—in order to lay my doubts at rest by ocular demonstration.

On my way back to the Atlantic, I found myself at Calgary on September 4th, Labour Day, a holiday on which every place of business was closed. During the morning there was a procession, all the different trades and professions filing past. The plumbers and electricians, clad in blue, escorted cars festooned with Union Jacks, and laden with lengths of huge piping or telephones; painters in snowy white held aloft standards composed of brushes; tin-workers wore tin helmets, carried toy tin instruments, and beat tattoos on tin basins; while the leather-workers had belts and gauntletted gloves.

All looked well in these makeshift uniforms, and were in pleasing contrast to the bands of mostly middle-aged business men, who slouched along in their usual dress behind a delightful little scarlet-clad boy,

who might have come out of a Carpaccio picture as he marched ahead, bearing aloft a quaint banner. The town band, headed by a man riding a spirited horse, led the procession, and carriages, some containing the City Fathers, drove behind it; but the weather was so cold and showery that the whole show was somewhat depressing.

I greatly disliked being unemployed, and felt so idle and useless at being out of work, that I could thoroughly sympathise with the depression felt by several in the hostel who could find no posts, though their cases, alas, were very different to mine.

One day I heard of something likely to suit me, and hastened to a hotel in the town, where a lively Frenchwoman, adorned with a profusion of imitation jewellery, received me with an open-hearted kindness, and implored me to come with her to help with the housework of a big farm at twenty dollars (£4) a month. When she found I could talk French, she became still more anxious to engage me, saying that she wanted a companion, and felt that she and I would get on together splendidly. It never occurred to her, or to any of my would-be employers, to require a reference of any sort, and, accustomed as I was to English ways, I used to think that they were very confiding. But a Canadian explained the situation to me

thus. "We don't pay much attention to testimonials," he said, "because if a man is unsatisfactory his relatives will be glad to give him flaming references in order to get rid of him. So we are accustomed to take you British at 'face value.' "

The Frenchwoman's home was twenty-four miles from a railway, and as she had three small children and was very far from strong, I should probably have had to "do " for the party, including her English husband and the hired men. Therefore, knowing my many limitations, I hesitated, said that I could only come to her for a month anyhow, but would let her know definitely during the morning of the next day ; and she gave me an address in the town, her last words being to urge me to close with her. The next morning I went to the address that she had given me, but found the house shut up, and a neighbour told me that the inmates were all away ; and when I returned to the hotel where I had had my interview, I found that Madame had "gone south " without leaving any message for me. This would have been a cruel blow to a girl dependent upon her own exertions for a livelihood ; but as I had been uncertain of the wisdom of going with her, it was almost a relief to have the matter taken out of my hands in this way. To do her justice, she sent me a note, that I got a couple of



days later, in which she said that she had been called home unexpectedly, and had, as unexpectedly, found a girl to go with her.

At the hostel we all took a frank interest in one another, and one or two of the lodgers who were of all classes, seemed as anxious for me to get a "position" as they were to get one for themselves.

There was a certain jealousy between the British and the Canadians, which came out now and again in the talk at table, at which both races were represented. An inmate of the hostel related that on one occasion she went to apply for a post at a house in the town. "We don't want any English here," was the rude remark of the mistress, when she presented herself; but it elicited the retort, "If I had known you were a Canadian, I should never have applied for your situation," and Miss Bates flounced out with her head held high. The lady sent after her, saying that she would like to engage a girl who showed so much spirit, but Miss Bates refused, not unnaturally, to go.

Of course there are faults on both sides to account for this attitude, but from what I saw during my tour, I am bound to say that my compatriots are a good deal to blame for it. They will persist in criticising Canada and things Canadian by British stan-



dards, and do not bear in mind the precept that you must "do at Rome as Rome does," apparently forgetting that they have come to the Dominion to earn their livelihood. As I was nearly six months in the country, staying in many places, usually in the humble position of a home-help, and was treated throughout with kindness and courtesy, it seems to me that this antagonism would speedily be done away with were every Britisher to divest himself of English prejudices and come out with a perfectly open mind.

Canadians are naturally intensely proud of the Dominion, and have every reason to be so; and if, as yet, they have not the culture that has come to England as a heritage from former generations, they are abundantly endowed with qualities far more valuable to pioneers. I was once asked whether I were not afraid of travelling alone in a strange country, but answered that as I was among my own kith and kin in the Empire, I felt at home; and this I maintain is the right attitude.

Some of the inmates of the hostel had no right to be in Canada at all, and had come out after reading the alluring literature, in which things are, to say the least of it, seen through rose-coloured glasses. One lady, elderly and far from strong, who had had good posts in England, had actually taken her ticket

for the Dominion after a talk with an enthusiastic Canadian lady, who had spoken vaguely of the "crowds of openings for women." My poor friend did not find many when she arrived in the country, and when I met her she was worn out with much work and little pay as a matron, and was having a rest before trying her luck afresh. She was skilful with her needle and could dressmake, but, as she could not use a sewing-machine, it would have been impossible for her to get work in a land where "more haste" is *not* always considered "worse speed." It was pathetic for one of her upbringing to have to go as house-keeper to three men on a ranch, and I confess that I saw her off at the station with considerable misgiving. Some months later, in passing through Calgary on my way East, I called at the hostel, and found her back again. Her health had broken down at the ranch, she had also had an accident, and was about to take a post as housemaid in a "rooming" house for a month, at a low wage, after which she hoped to get work again as a home-help.

Another, a particularly charming woman, had been a governess with excellent posts, and was, moreover, an accomplished milliner. Unluckily she refused to turn this talent to account, but was determined to be a home-help. A place was found for her, and off she

went, but returned in a couple of days, and amused us all with her account of her experiences with a fussy old lady. As I sat next to her at table, I asked why she would not go round to the shops and see whether she could get taken on as a milliner, but the bare idea of asking for work at a "shop" was abhorrent to her. I offered to accompany her in the quest, but she still clung to her "home-help" idea.

"You are most unfit for the post," I said to her bluntly; and indeed a delicate, highly-strung woman, not in her first youth, cannot do the rough work that is expected of her in Canada. "Why won't you be a milliner or do dressmaking, and take to something that you *can* do, and that will bring you in money?" I asked.

"I hate the idea of it," was her answer. "I want to live in a home and arrange the flowers and help the lady of the house with her correspondence."

"I do not believe that there *is* such a post in all Canada," I retorted, but she was by no means convinced. Her next step was to try work at an hotel in the Rockies, but the high altitude was too much for her nerves, and when I ran across her again she had thrown up the post and was doing nothing.

As I was then staying at an hotel, I was obliged to let her into the secret of my "home-help" doings.

It was gratifying when she exclaimed with surprise, saying that she and everyone at the hostel thought that I was compelled to earn my livelihood, and more gratifying to be able to introduce her to various ladies, one of whom at all events has helped her to get work.

Another of my table companions was a nice girl, who excited my warmest sympathy, as she was under the impression that she was a complete failure in Canada, and yet could not bear to return to England and confess herself beaten. She had been home-help to a small family, and was not a success, as she could neither cook nor wash, and was unable to manage the small boy who was placed in her charge.

When I met her, she had got a job of plain sewing for some hours daily, and did not know what she should do when the engagement was over. I had no idea either, but I did my best to cheer her up, as her state of hopeless depression was the very worst in which to approach Fortune. Most luckily, an Englishwoman stopping at the hostel took a fancy to her, and offered to take her off to her ranch for a small salary, but with the promise of instructing her in those domestic arts, without a knowledge of which she should never have come to the Dominion. On the very day that this was arranged I went off to one of my situations, and my new friend accompanied me to the station,



and said that I had given her courage, and that she was determined to be a success this time. She was young and adaptable, and I heard later on that she was doing splendidly at the ranch, so I hope that she will make her home in Canada.

All nurses ought to know that they cannot get on, in Calgary, at all events, unless they have a General Hospital certificate for three years. I made friends with one nurse, who had had two years of General Hospital training, and had been seven years as district nurse, and yet, with all that experience, she got very few cases, although they were certainly lucrative when she *did* get them, as twenty to twenty-five dollars (£4 to £5) a week was paid for a case. Other English nurses told me the same tale of lack of work, and two were going out as home-helps in despair. At another town I came across a girl who had been a trained nurse in a Children's Hospital, but she could get no nursing, and, being a skilled seamstress, took a post as needlewoman and house-keeper combined. She had to sew from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., and do household duties before she began her work, so it was hardly surprising that her health gave way, and that she hated Canada and longed to return to England. I understand that the reason of this is that nursing is practically standardised in the



Dominion, and doctors naturally prefer to work with women who employ Canadian methods.

→ Another lady said that she had been a governess in England, and could cook, iron, sew, had taken charge of a house, and in her native land was considered most capable. But it was very different when she got to Canada, and because she could not scrub or do heavy washing she was looked down upon as stupid and incompetent, and had, as I had, a feeling of depression and helplessness. / Certainly the Canadian women are extraordinarily quick and clever in every kind of housework, and I never ceased admiring the way they could turn their hands to anything. The houses are always spotlessly neat, they are first-class cooks, and, as a rule, are very spick and span in the way they dress, however simple may be their clothes. On the farms they make the soap, cure the ham and bacon, bottle quantities of fruit for winter use, rear poultry, and on occasion can milk the cows, groom, harness and drive the horses, and are most handy with a hammer and nails.

After giving a somewhat gloomy picture of various educated British women, I feel that I must now show the reverse of the shield, though it must be understood that the successful women are not, as a rule, to be found in cheap hostels or in the hotels.

I met two sisters who had come out with the firm determination to work hard for three years and to take whatever post was offered to them. The result of their efforts was a comfortable bungalow, to which they have retired, and will keep poultry in independence for the rest of their days. Again, the Matron of a Y.W.C.A. Home told me that she was the daughter of a Scotch captain in the navy, and that when her father died she and her family were left very badly off, and she supported herself by teaching. One day she heard of the openings in Canada, and determined to go there, finally arriving at Toronto, at the age of seventeen, with only *sixpence* in her pocket, most of which she spent in writing a cheery letter home to her mother. Fortunately she saw an advertisement in the newspapers, and interviewed the manager of some business, who took her then and there into his office as book-keeper, where she remained for three and a half years. She had gone into a cheap boarding-house at Toronto, and, to her joy, the money that the manager gave her for the half-week in his office just enabled her to pay her week's board and lodging. She learnt stenography in her spare time, and then got a post in a large bank, where, if I remember rightly, she stayed twenty years, and had the proud distinction of being the

first woman ever employed in a post of trust in any bank in Canada.

The moment that she got regular work she gave much of her time to helping others, and when her connection with the bank was over she spent seven years in teaching the Indians. Now, she told me, she had two farms, some valuable stock and building-lots, and had paid into the Dominion Annuity Scheme—in fact, was very well off, and had only taken the post of Matron to help the Y.W.C.A. I felt, while talking with her, that I had come across a remarkable woman, and I saw that anyone with her brains, pluck, and energy was bound to succeed, however hard might be the circumstances in which she was placed. A young girl, penniless and friendless, in a new country, where there are few helping hands held out to strangers, the odds seemed all against her, but she had character, and triumphantly overcame every obstacle.

This is an extract from the letter of an applicant of the Colonial Intelligence League, who is working as a stenographer in the east of the Dominion :

*" February 1912.*

" I have been at work only two weeks, and they have paid me fifteen dollars a week (£3, 2s. 6d.). . . .

I do not think the same work in London would bring in more than 30s. a week.

"I got temporary work immediately . . . and took three posts of a few days' each at 10s. 6d. a day. I got these posts simply by going to the typewriting offices and saying I wanted work. Apparently, after you have finished with one post, the typewriter people ring up the firm to find out if you have given satisfaction, and if you have they are glad to keep you on their list. I could have got half a dozen other posts easily, as they were ringing me up before I had done with one post to know if I could take another !

"I do not find that living . . . is quite so expensive as one is led to believe, that is, in proportion to the much higher salary one can get here. . . .

"I have not met with any antipathy to the English stenographer . . . but only the nicest treatment at the employment agencies and in the offices."

While at the Women's Hostel I tried my hand at book-canyassing, as one of the inmates, who had heard that it was very lucrative, had started it, and asked me to "do" a few streets and see how I liked the job. She and I were to share any profits that might result, and I was provided with a section of what is

known as a "Red Letter" Bible, also a Life of King Edward VII, and a "Household Companion."

The pamphlet of instructions advised, or rather commanded, the canvasser never to reveal the object of his visit until he had got admittance into a house, never to let the volumes out of his hand, nor must he ever take "No" for an answer.

I fear that I did not adhere to my instructions at all, hence my lamentable failure; in fact, I started proceedings by stating my business, and as I was feeble enough to take "No" for an answer, I did not get a single order. After trying my luck at half a dozen houses, I gave up the idea of practising a profession that was utterly against the grain. Fate, however, was good to me, and sent me a reply to my "ad.," written in so kindly a manner that I at once closed with the writer, and set off anew on my quest for experience.



## CHAPTER VI

### ON A DAIRY-FARM

I WELL remember how I arrived at my destination, a large dairy-farm, after ten o'clock on a June night, and wondered whether anyone would meet me at the station.

As I stood by my things on the platform, a man stepped forward from among a group of working men, and, with the kindness that I have encountered everywhere in Canada, asked me whether he could carry them for me. I said that I was bound for Mr. Brown's farm, and was engaged as home-help by his wife. "Oh, that's all right," was the answer. "Over there are two of Brown's boys. I'll tell them that you are here, as most likely they have come to meet you." This, as it happened, was the case, and I shook hands with two taciturn yokels in "Buffalo Bill" hats, who volunteered a timid remark or two as they picked up my "grip" and hold-all and marched me off between them into the darkness. After a while we turned in at a gate and stumbled along a track among pines, where we seemed in danger of colliding

with cows, their bells sounding on all sides of us as we picked our way as best we could over the tree-roots on the path. Though I had only engaged myself for a fortnight, yet I was not quite easy in my mind, for I knew that my success in this venture depended almost entirely on whether my new "missus" and I took to one another; and I should have liked to have questioned my guides about her, but of course that would not have done at all. By this time we were approaching a white-painted, log-built house, with green doors and windows, and a woman, with one of the kindest faces I have ever seen, came out with a light and shook hands with me. I liked and trusted her on the spot, and next day she told me that she had had the same favourable opinion of me, so our acquaintance had an auspicious beginning. She pressed food upon me, but I was tired and not hungry, and was glad to go upstairs to my room. This, I may as well say at once, was one of the drawbacks of my new situation, for it was only divided from that used by the family by a thin partition; and as it had no door, merely a curtain, every sound in the next room was plainly audible, and I never felt as if I had any privacy.

Mrs. Brown asked me to be in the kitchen next morning by seven o'clock, in order that she and I

might get breakfast ready for her husband, his three hired men, and the three children. Mr. Brown always quietly crept down the staircase at five o'clock, roused his men sleeping in a shack close by, and he and they started to milk forty cows before the eight o'clock breakfast. This began with porridge, eaten with new milk, the staple dish throughout Canada ; and then would come fried bacon or boiled eggs, and plenty of hot toast and butter, with, of course, the inevitable tea, usually too potent a beverage for my taste. Mrs. Brown and I used to have our breakfast alone if the men were late, as was often the case, and this arrangement I liked, for directly they appeared our work was cut out in waiting upon them. We all ate in the dining-room, and had a good deal of running into the adjoining kitchen to fill their plates, and those of the children, from the porridge-pot, to bring in the eggs, bacon, and toast kept hot in the oven, to pour out their tea, and so on. During the progress of breakfast, the children would begin to straggle down in stockinged feet, and would hunt about in the kitchen for their boots. Kitty, aged seven, could attire herself, but usually needed some little assistance with her dress, that fastened behind ; Master Joe, aged five, could manage for himself, with the exception of tying his boot-laces ; but the youngest

hope, only just three, had to be got up by Mrs. Brown, who always disappeared for that purpose as soon as breakfast was under weigh.

I do not wish to run down the youth of Canada, but certainly in the three situations in which I encountered children I found them rough, mannerless, and unruly, a great contrast to their courteous parents: they were always undisciplined, and completely lacking in deference to their elders.

The young Browns did not go to school, but hung about all day, and not having enough vent for their energies, used to squabble constantly, the one who was worsted in any encounter, howling so vigorously, that at first I used to rush to the spot, feeling sure that some fearful accident had occurred. One reason of this was that the parents were far too busy to bring up their children in the way they should go, and Mrs. Brown, who was under no illusions as to her noisy family, used to lament to me that she, who had been a school-teacher, could not keep her own treasures in better order.

After breakfast came the "prose," as my "missus" called it, of washing-up; but as we always washed the crockery and dried it turn and turn about, it was not nearly as monotonous a job as I found it later on. Moreover, my employer and I had got into



sympathy with one another from the first, and enjoyed working together.

She told me that the moment she saw the word "educated" in my "ad." she longed to secure my services, more as a companion than as a home-help, and I felt that first day as if I had anchored my bark, for the present, in calm water. My new mistress was most easy to get on with, and did not make me nervous or find fault with me. To use her own expression, she "never looked out for flies." She assured me that she would be delighted to show me how to do things, but that she did not mind at all if I did my work in the English way, and she would like me to make my own cakes and puddings, as they would be a pleasant change from her own. She was liberal and yet economical, and often said that a bad housewife "could throw out more with a spoon than her husband could put in with a shovel." I learnt much from her and enjoyed her teaching—in fact, so kind was she, that after a day or two I had to insist on doing more work, as she was far too ready to take the lion's share of every task, and my salary was now at the rate of £3 a month.

My first task after breakfast was to sweep out the men's shack and make their beds; then there were the two bedrooms upstairs to be done, the dining-



room and kitchen to sweep out, water to fetch from the well close at hand, and wood from the wood-pile near by; the fowls also had to be fed and watered. When these "chores" were done, it was time to peel a bowl of potatoes, the only vegetable used in many parts of Canada, and then I laid the table for the one-o'clock dinner, and put the potatoes on to boil, and began to turn pieces of steak in the frying-pan. Canadians have a perfect horror of meat being "rare," as they call it, and so the steak had to be cooked until it was almost of the consistency of leather. We women waited on the men as soon as they appeared and had taken their seats, and we ate our own meal in the intervals of supplying them with meat, bread, and potatoes, pouring out big cups of tea for them, and dispensing slices of rhubarb-pie. This differs from our English fruit-pies, as the rhubarb, sliced small, is placed on one round of pastry and covered by another, and then baked. Though nice when freshly made, the lower crust soon becomes sodden as the juice oozes through it. Meat and "dessert," which answers to our pudding course, were served on the same plate; but considerate Mrs. Brown produced another one for me, saying, "I expect that Miss Sykes is accustomed to have two plates." Of course I declined a privilege shared by none of the family,

and indeed, so many ways are there of looking at things, I soon got to approve of the "one-plate" system, as it meant nine plates less to wash up after the meal !

Mr. Brown was a good-looking, intelligent young man, and often talked well when he had got accustomed to me, but at first the three hired men were very "bashful," as Mrs. Brown expressed it. She told me later on that since my advent they spent twice as much time as formerly in washing themselves and brushing their hair before meals, at which they always appeared in their shirt-sleeves. Poor fellows ! they had a hard life I thought. Master and men were up at five o'clock, and would drive the forty cows into an enclosure and milk them. Some sixty gallons of milk had then to be strained twice, the pails well washed, and the milk put into cans, which were half sunk in the water of the "milk-house," a wooden building that floated on the stream close by.

After breakfast one man had to drive the herd to a pasture a couple of miles away, where they fed until they were rounded-up and driven in again for the evening milking. During the night the animals wandered among the spruces round the house, and at first used to keep me awake with the noise of their

bells. Another man had to send a great part of the milk off by the morning train, and went round with a cart to supply the hotel and various customers in the little town; while there were cow-houses to clean out, and endless pails and cans to be washed and then scalded. As far as I could gather, the men had only an hour to themselves after the midday meal, and there was a good deal to be done before they were free after the evening milking.

Later on, when the weather became sunny, I produced my camera, and took snapshots of one and all. Fortunately most of my portraits turned out well, and gave great pleasure to my sitters, who in time got less tongue-tied.

Usually I was free in the evening about seven o'clock, and I often went for a stroll then, as it was perfectly light till quite late—in fact I have written without artificial light at a quarter to ten. Kind Mrs. Brown warned me that I might find some of the men “forward” if I walked alone, but I had no cause for alarm in this respect, and, as a rule, Kitty would accompany me, chattering volubly the whole time.

As I was treated with such consideration by my employer, I felt that I ought to do something in my turn, and my conscience smote me for appropriating

the whole of one room with a big double-bed, while the entire family slept in the other. Accordingly I did great violence to my feelings, and offered to share my couch with Kitty! On the second night Mrs. Brown carried her in fast asleep, and deposited her at the foot of my bed; but it was a most unpleasant experience, as the little girl fidgeted and kicked me the whole night through, woke up in the darkness, wondered where she was, and was terrified. I had only the shortest snatches of sleep, and felt half dead with fatigue next morning, finding it a great effort to get down by seven o'clock to make the breakfast. Fortunately for me, the child had suffered just as much as I had done, and was quite ill from her bad night, so that there was no question of having her as a room-mate again, and my conscience was appeased.

Certainly Canadian air, as a rule, is most invigorating; and I worked sometimes from half-past six to half-past four without a pause (barring meals), and did not feel the slightest fatigue. But personally I could not have borne to have lived my whole life in this way, so much housework and so little relaxation; and if I found the life monotonous in lovely summer weather, what would it have been in the winter, with the house probably over-heated, the windows hardly ever opened, and the minimum of outdoor exercise?



The personal washing of the entire family here, and on most farms that I visited, was performed in an enamel basin in the kitchen, and faces and hands dried on a roller-towel, hung on the door, I being the only member of the household who had a jug and basin in my room, which I supplemented by my folding india-rubber bath. I used to go upstairs at intervals to wash my hands; though my kindly "missus" begged me to avail myself of the kitchen basin and towel instead, apologising for the griminess of the latter, as the children always had such dirty hands! She seemed surprised when I declined her offer!

Sunday was just like any other day, as the meals had to be at the same hours, the cows had to be milked and driven to pasture, and milk and cream taken round to customers. I urged Mrs. Brown to attend church and leave me in charge of the one-o'clock dinner, and I myself went to the service in the evening. The clergyman was respected by one and all, and the quietest of the hired men said to me, when I asked whether he knew him, "Oh, he's the right sort! He says that people needn't go crazy about religion."

It always seemed to me that I got through very little in the morning, though I was down at seven o'clock. Breakfast would be ready by eight; but



often the men did not get in till half an hour later, and the porridge, bacon, toast, and eggs had to be kept hot for them.

Mr. Brown and two of the men would appear first; then, about nine o'clock, the man who had driven the cows to their pasture would turn up, and often ate his meal in solitary state. I would bring in the food that had been kept warm, and would venture on a remark or two as I carried plates and dishes out to the kitchen to wash them, or brought them into the dining-room to pack them away in a cupboard. He usually answered with a simple "Yes" or "No," and Mrs. Brown said that the reason of his terseness was that he got chaffed by the other men about coming in alone and being served by the new home-help. Often it was ten o'clock before all was cleared away and I could start off on my housemaid's work.

The two boys were rather a trial to me, as they were in and out of the kitchen all day long, drinking water at frequent intervals, with the dipper, out of the pails. The habit prevails throughout Canada of using the tin dipper as a drinking-cup. The men, after drinking, toss away the rest of the water, but the children, unless my eye were on them, would drink and put what they did not finish back into the bucket. Kitty, an intelligent child, began the rudi-

ments of the three R's in my spare moments, and got on quite nicely ; but the boys, who never left the enclosure, seemed to be in mischief every few minutes, as an outlet to their bubbling-over energies. There were so many "dont's" in their lives that I had an involuntary sympathy for them in spite of the way they bothered me.

- (1) The fence bordering the railway track must never be crossed.
- (2) The creek by the milk-house (the most tempting spot in the whole domain), must never be approached.
- (3) The pump must not be touched.
- (4) They must not play in the wheat-shed.
- (5) They must not chase the hens.

To this long list I added a few "dont's" of my own as to teasing the dog and keeping grasshoppers and toads imprisoned in their hot little hands.

It really was quite a responsibility when Mr. and Mrs. Brown went away once for a few hours, and left me in sole charge of their active family. There were fearful roars from the youngest, who had somehow or other mounted on to the edge of the soft-water barrel, and had then lost his balance and fallen heavily to the ground. Hardly had I ascertained that he had no limbs broken, when yells from Joe announced that

he had hit his own finger with his father's hammer in place of a nail ; and later on little Tom was dragged up to me by the two elder children, as he had made off to seek his mother, and was found in the very act of creeping under the forbidden fence. I thought they were very quiet after this, and felt cross when I found that they had emptied the pails I had just filled, and were using the water to make mud-pies in the sandy soil outside ; and later on, when I went to refill the buckets, I discovered that they had " primed " the pump with sand, which forced me to fling away a good deal of water before it would run clean. Certainly I do not altogether disagree with a lady by whom I sat one night in a hotel, and who said to me, " Never go anywhere where there are children—they are the very devil ! "

I was with the Browns on Coronation Day, and to mark the event I gave " Coronation " post cards all round at breakfast. Mr. Brown said that he thought he ought to run up a flag to show his loyalty, and of course I applauded the idea warmly, but nothing was done—we were all far too busy. It was washing-day for us women, and directly we had cleared away breakfast and had swept the rooms, we began, Mrs. Brown rocking the " cradle," and I turning the wringer. She did not make nearly as toilsome a business of the

whole operation as I found prevailed elsewhere in Canada, and we got the family washing all hung out to dry soon after midday. On the other hand, it was by no means as snowy white as when I saw it done by other housewives, though probably the sand that got into everything may have been the cause of this. Certainly I have never been in a place where so much sweeping was required, every breath of wind seeming to cover the kitchen floor with sand in spite of all our care.

Mrs. Brown had had a hard life since her girlhood, and, though a comparatively young woman, looked far older than her years, worn out with ceaseless work. Like the great majority of Canadian women, she was extraordinarily quick and capable, and, as I told her, would have concocted a cake and put it in the oven, and perhaps baked it, before I had collected the materials to make mine. But the Demon of Work had got her in its clutches, as it seems to get so many Canadian women, and she *could* not rest or take things easily.

She had been for four years on a ranch—completely bare of crops, as it was a cattle-range—and she said that the great expanse got on her nerves, and she hated it, save when in the spring the ground was starred with myriads of tiny flowers. Her husband



and the other men were off with the cattle during the greater part of the day, and she told me that without her children she thought that she would have gone mad.

In summer the heat was great, and the mosquitoes were so bad that she hardly ever left the house, but lived behind the wire screens, which were in front of all the doors and windows; and she often watched her husband riding off, looking as if he and his horse were in a mist, so dense was the cloud of these pestilent little insects. The men all wore veils and gloves, and covered their horses as much as possible with sacking. The poor cattle, however hungry they might be, dared not feed when the air was still, but lay in the barns to get refuge from the mosquitoes, waiting there until a breeze sprung up, when they would hurry out to the pasture. Sometimes the winters were terrible, so severe that the cattle died on the ranges, and she was kept indoors for weeks at a time. Mr. Brown, most fortunately, had a great store of hay, and once fed his sheep, over two thousand in number, daily, and he and his partner had a snow-plough that tossed away the snow, and enabled the animals to feed on the grass underneath. They got to understand the purpose of this plough very soon, and the whole flock would follow it in a straggling line, perhaps a mile long, browsing as they went.



Canadian as she was, Mrs. Brown had ever a good word for the English, who, she said, were considered to make the kindest husbands of any, in the way of helping their wives, though the Canadians were supposed to give money more freely for household expenses. Again and again on the prairie an Englishman would give her a hand with the interminable dish-washing, and would sometimes be sneered at by the other men for so doing. The rough old Scotchman, her husband's partner, would never help her in any way, and she quoted to me more than once the remark of a Scotchwoman on the prairie, who said to her, "My countrymen seem to think that there is no limit to a woman's strength."

Day after day she rose to a round of unending toil, and during all the incessant work her three children arrived. The second came before his time, and as a snowstorm was raging, it was impossible to go for the doctor; so she and her husband had to do as best they could. Usually the women go into the nearest town for their confinements, every hospital in Canada having large maternity wards for the purpose; and as all Canadian men are as handy at household "chores" as their wives, they can look after themselves and the children very well for a time.

My employer and her husband were a thoroughly

united couple, yet she assured me that had she had a vision of what her early married life would be, she would never have linked her fortunes with his.

"I haven't a single good word for the prairie," she would say, "and I got to hate the very sight of a man when I was there." I was surprised at this, and inquired why.

"Because a man meant preparing a meal. Our ranch was on a main trail, and man after man as he came along would drop in and ask for food, as a matter of course, and very seldom did he give me a word of thanks for it."

"How horrid! I should have felt inclined to refuse to cook for such ungrateful creatures," I remarked.

"Oh, well, I felt like it very often," was her reply; "but if I had done so, we should have got a bad name in the district, and I had to think of my husband. It was a life of slavery. Just imagine it! In shearing-time I had to cook for fifteen men, and they needed five meals a day, and I couldn't get a woman to help me for love or money. I was too busy to go and see my neighbours—the nearest lived four miles off—and I just got into the way of thinking of nothing but how to get through the day's work."

"Don't you think that the men would have helped you if you had asked them?" I said. "I met a girl

who told me that her husband had a ranch, and that she rode half the day and 'jollied the boys,' who did her work for her."

"Yes, there were women in our part who went on like that, but," and Mrs. Brown's voice had a tragic note, "they could never get free of the prairie as we have done. They took their freedom while they were there, wasted the time of the hired men, and there they will have to stay all their lives," and she shuddered at the mere thought of it.

"But aren't there some women who love the life? In England we hear so much of the 'call of the prairie.'"

My mistress looked dubious. "There may be some," she conceded, "but I never met them. All my friends hated the loneliness and the lack of amusement and the same dull round day after day. Do you know, if ever I sat down and wrote, or did some sewing, Kitty would come up to me to ask whether it were Sunday, so astonished was she to see me resting, as on the week-days I was on the 'go' all the time. I have heard since from two or three of our neighbours, and they are all suffering from 'nerves,' and I myself am worn out and old before my time with the life."

This was true; but I pointed out to her that now, as they were so well off that Mr. Brown need not

work at all, she ought to rest every afternoon, or go out and see some of her neighbours. But this was a counsel of perfection. She saw its wisdom, but said sadly that she was so wound up, as it were, that she positively *had* to keep going all day, and that she had now lost all desire for social intercourse. And this I found to be the case with many Canadian women. The habit of work was so deeply ingrained in them that they went on when there was no necessity for it, and far too often broken health and mental derangement stop this activity. From the Atlantic to the Pacific the women in country districts, as a rule, wore far worse than the men, and the monotonous work, too much tea, little outdoor exercise, and few neighbours or amusements appeared to me to be the causes of this. The men have a far better life, though the extremes of heat and cold must be very trying. They work with other men, and have the animals to look after, and, best of all, are in the open air most of the day. As Mr. Brown remarked to me when talking of their life on the ranch, "The prairie is no 'snap' for a woman."

The isolation makes men and women shy and nervous, and I had an example of this when three smartly dressed ladies turned up at the kitchen door one wet afternoon, asked to buy eggs, and requested



glasses of water. Mrs. Brown had a fit of shyness, and her home-help had to give the ladies water and tell them where to go, as they wished to interview Mr. Brown about supplying them with milk. Poor things! they had to wait a long time in the rain near the cow-house before one of the four men summoned up sufficient courage to emerge from it and confront them. Mrs. Brown chaffed them about their cowardice when we were all sitting at tea afterwards, and her husband turned to me and explained the matter thus, "You see, Miss Sykes, those ladies were real 'toney' folk. They weren't in our class, and so we didn't feel comfortable with them."

They were all quite "comfortable" with *me*, but this state of things was nearly destroyed one day, when in the course of conversation at table I carelessly dropped the information that I spoke French. There instantly ensued an uneasy silence, and the faces of the grown-ups wore a look almost of dismay, until I explained that owing to the nearness of England to France this accomplishment was naturally far commoner than it would be in Western Canada.

This leads me on to make a few diffident remarks on the subject of class distinctions in the Dominion. It struck me again and again that the difference between England and Canada in this respect was

X



*class distinctions*

that England acknowledged these distinctions, and Canada pretended to ignore them. In the big towns, where I had introductions, things seemed to be very much as they are in the Old Country; but on the prairie, and in small towns, where everyone is "on the make," all are on an equality, and one realises that one is in a land developed by the pluck and energy of self-made men and women. It is a kind of paradise for the labouring classes, and, as a working woman remarked later on, "I call upon people here who would not have taken any notice of me in England." Culture and refinement, art and literature, are not much wanted as yet. The ideal side of life is left out; the material side is often too much in evidence, as money is the criterion of success, and a man wins respect according as he "makes good."

All this is inevitable in a new country, a land full of such splendid opportunities and possibilities that even a traveller feels exhilarated by the atmosphere of optimism, and I longed again and again for British women with high ideals to come out and do their part in building up the Empire.

At last the time came for me to leave Mrs. Brown, and though I had only engaged myself to her for a fortnight, yet I had a sense that I was deserting her, so often had she said that my presence made the

work a pleasure to her instead of a toil. All were sorry to say good-bye to me, and though the three men had an access of shyness as I shook hands with them, they managed to stammer out good wishes for my success. Mr. Brown invited me to stay as a guest at any future date, and Mrs. Brown came to see me off at the train, the tears in her eyes as we embraced at parting.

"You *have* been a good 'missus' to me!" I exclaimed gratefully.

"I have only treated you as I should like anyone to treat me," was her reply, but it was typical of the whole woman, and I knew that I should have to travel far before I met her like again.

"All aboard!" called out the conductor, and we exchanged a last hurried handclasp as I took my seat, and was borne off to seek another situation in another province.

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM CALGARY TO THE PACIFIC

WHEN the rolling downs round Calgary are left behind, the traveller enters a region of foothills, and then comes upon the glorious peaks of the Rockies, my journey in this enchanted region always remaining in my mind as more of the nature of a wonderful dream than a reality. A few points stand out from a vision of snowy peaks, great glaciers, headlong streams, and foaming waterfalls. I remember an evening at Banff, for example, when I stood on the bridge over the Bow River, watching a sunset of indescribable loveliness. As I turned away, my eyes met those of a woman who was gazing as I was, and at the same moment we said to one another, "How beautiful it is!"

"Have you seen the falls?" she inquired, and on my negative she offered to guide me to the spot through the pine-woods to where, after a stretch of rapids, the river hurls itself finely down a rocky descent. My acquaintance, a school-teacher on her holiday, had an impassioned love of nature, and the peaks

round Banff were all personalities to her, her voice becoming touched with emotion as she pointed out the lovely Cascade Mountain, its crest wreathed in fleecy rosy clouds. Another memory of Banff is my visit to the herd of buffalo in the National Park, and I had a distinct pang of apprehension when my companion and I found ourselves close to the great animals, which were feeding quietly among the short scrub, apparently quite unconscious of the tourists. They came towards us, browsing as they went, and a man, armed with a camera, snapped a big bull that came up close to him, and passed, munching away unconcernedly the whole time. Having read in my youth of the wild fury that was said to possess the herds of buffalo and incite them to mad charges, I trusted that nothing would occur to irritate these animals, as there was no shelter of any kind where we were.

I stopped at Laggan in order to have a glimpse of Lake Louise, with its wonderful blue-green water, a vision of perfect beauty, and here I fell in with a couple of school-teachers. One in her twenties, frank, free, and full of *joie de vivre*, interested me by her recital of how she had made her way. She had been a nursemaid in order to get money to pay for her college fees, had been a waitress twice, and this holiday was the

result of many an economy. Did I like her dress? She had made it all herself; and I wavered miserably between truth and charity as I regarded the skin-tight black sateen robe, with low-cut neck and elbow-sleeves, curiously out of place in this mountain resort, where everyone wore tweeds.

The girl loved her work, and was proud of her influence over the children. She told me of one poor little Galician boy who knew not a word of English, and was mocked at by the whole class for his ignorance. The child's misery aroused his teacher's pity, and she laid her hand kindly on his shoulder, and from that moment he adored her as a goddess, worked like a slave at his lessons, and one day, with an immense pride, brought her a sparrow that he had killed. She grasped at once that this was a great achievement for the boy, and instead of reproving him for cruelty, she accepted the dead bird, and thanked him for the gift.

On one occasion she noticed that another of her pupils had the throat of his red flannel shirt fastened with a nail! She offered to sew a button on, and then to her horror discovered that the mother had stitched the child up in his shirt for the winter! So she used her influence to get him bathed, and actually made underlinen for him, and washed it herself at



intervals. As she chatted on, my admiration for her grew, for I realised that this one girl was unconsciously sowing seeds of chivalry, courtesy, and the love of goodness, which would go far to counteract the influence of many a miserable and squalid home.

When I left Lake Louise and got into the "char-à-banc" to take me the two and a half miles downhill to the station, I was amused at a quaint American lady, who told me that she was bored to death with a three months' trip of sightseeing. "Nothing gives me the faintest pleasure now," she said, "but I should hate to miss anything."

She went on to say that she knew that I was English by my accent, and that when she was in London she had picked up the English mode of speech—"in fact it came quite naturally to me, and was not an affectation."

This reminded me of an American I knew, who told me that he could hardly understand me on first acquaintance, because my "English accent was so strong." Later on in my tour I found myself at a hotel table with Canadians and Americans, and one of the latter insisted that the English all spoke with an incorrect accent, and that Americans and all foreigners had the correct one. To prove this statement, she began by saying that our language was

based on Latin. To this I firmly demurred, but she carried the table with her by remarking triumphantly, "Why do they teach Latin in the schools, then? Of course it is because English is derived from it." Anxious to enlighten my ignorance, she demanded, "Aren't the French, Italian, and Spanish languages based on Latin?" and when I agreed to this, she clinched her argument with the following: "Well, when French, Italians, and Spaniards learn English, they always speak it with the same accent as we Americans do (I have often taken them for Americans myself), and as *they* are Latin races, of course they know the right accent for a language based on Latin." It was useless to remark that in all likelihood the foreigners she had come across had learnt English in the land of the Stars and Stripes, so I was obliged to subside unconvinced.

Golden was another of my stopping-places, and here I hoped to find work in the newly opened-up Columbia Valley, but was advised to go further to some big centre, as the valley was reported to be colonised for the most part by bachelors.

"If you have a little money, don't let on about it," said my kindly informant, "for someone or other will be sure to get it out of you if you do. We call that class 'daylight highwaymen' here." Conse-

quently I only spent a night in the beautifully situated little town, and in the afternoon walked along the "track" to a splendid canyon through which the Columbia River rushes. The hotel proprietor, who interested himself in my doings, warned me to be careful, as the thunder of the water in the narrow gorge would completely drown the sound of any approaching train; and owing to this my walk was not an unmixed pleasure, as I was continually on the alert for danger. The hotel manager saw me off when I left, pointing out to me two men who were about to get a free railway ride by sitting in between the cars when the train came up. He said that he had land in the Columbia Valley, for which he had paid fifteen hundred dollars, and it was now worth as many thousand. He had tried to farm it himself, but found the life so "lonesome" that he came into the town; but he had no intention of selling out, as he predicted a great future for the valley, which, he said, was beginning to attract a good class of settlers.

An American lady chatted to me as we came from Golden, and somewhat got on my nerves, because at the sight of every rushing stream or graceful waterfall she exclaimed, "What a dreadful waste of water-power!" She was also greatly adverse to foreign missions, and remarked, "I'd never give a cent

to them. The good God created the heathen as they are, and can take care of them—it is just foolishness on our part to try and alter their ways.” This I could not allow to pass, and I rather opened her eyes by giving her some idea of what her position would be had she been born a Mohammedan woman, for example.

Glacier was my last halt in the Rockies, and it seemed to me as if the scenery reached a climax of wild grandeur here; the panorama was so majestic and stupendous, and the huge glacier, that comes down to the pines, and appears to overhang the hotel, was a wonderful sight.

It was a superb day, and the moment my small belongings were deposited, I set out to walk to the ice, along a trail with little plank bridges at intervals laid across the rushing torrent, soon reaching the boulder-strewn moraine, across which I stumbled to the ice itself, and sat down to enjoy the wonderful blue of the crevasses, and to gaze at the stately outline of Sir Donald, the Matterhorn of the Rockies. An ice-cold stream emerged from beneath the glacier, and a brown-clad lady, her brown hair dripping, her bronzed face wreathed in smiles, and a great exultation in her eyes, told me that she had plunged her head and feet into the chilly water, and was only



grieved that she was unable to yield herself more completely to the torrent.

As I reluctantly returned to the hotel I was fortunate enough to run across my American lady traveller for the third time, and also found another author, an Englishwoman to whom I had a letter of introduction, and whom I had been most anxious to meet, feeling that her knowledge and advice would be of much assistance to me. It was very pleasant to see friends after having been for so long with strangers, and I was sorry to be unable to spare more than one perfect day to the many charms of Glacier.

Again I was in the train ; the passengers all stood up to see the marvellous Loop, where the line makes a kind of figure of 8, and a little later we got out to get a view of the fine Albert Canyon, various people asking me how I thought the Rockies compared with the Alps. It seemed to me that the pine-forests, the rushing torrents, and countless waterfalls were much alike ; but the Rockies are more terrifying in their grandeur, for though they have comparatively little snow on their peaks in the height of summer, yet there are no long grassy slopes gemmed with myriads of tiny flowers, no tinkling cow-bells, no goats, and no châteaux, all of which give such a happy charm to the Swiss mountains.



One of my fellow-travellers told me of some of the difficulties that had to be overcome before the great railway bored its way through the giant barrier of the Rockies. At one point it was necessary to climb the face of a rock, and so perilous was the undertaking that man after man refused the task, until a Chinaman offered to go up; and not only did he reach the indicated niche, but he actually stayed for two or three days on his giddy perch until the work was accomplished.

Certainly the C.P.R. by linking the East with the West, and thus opening up the enormous continent, has done a great work, and in her turn the Dominion is repaying the debt in a manner worthy of the colossal enterprise.

At Sicamous Junction (aptly nicknamed Mosquitomous!) I left the main line, and went down the Okanagan Valley. Enderby, Armstrong, and Vernon are all pretty little towns, situated in lovely scenery, near beautiful lakes, and surrounded by wooded hills, in which live bears and deer. My object was to find out whether fruit-farming is a suitable opening for the average outdoor woman, and the almost universal consensus of opinion was that it was not. Could women do the necessary ploughing? The spraying was a horribly dirty operation; and

though they might prune, pluck, and pack their fruit, yet it would be practically impossible for them to run a fruit-ranch without hired help. This appeared to be exorbitantly dear, as I was informed that a competent man would require £10 a month, with his board and lodging thrown in, and that a Chinaman demanded 8s. a day for a long job, and 10s. for a short one.

Fruit-ranching, I was told, needs careful and continuous attention, except for a couple of months during the winter, and really only pays if done on a large scale. A man by constant labour, *i.e.* working from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. with the aid of scientific knowledge, can make a competence out of a ten-acre plot, but fruit-growing on less would be starvation. One acquaintance, who had been eighteen years in Canada, said that he had never made a single cent out of his orchard, and that in his district all the peach trees were being cut down, as so many had succumbed to the frosts, and the fruit was invariably tart in flavour. The cost of planted land in the Okanagan is high, so greatly has this valley been "boomed," and more than one man told me he would be thankful to sell his ranch if he could get the price he gave, and would then buy land in Ontario for about a quarter of the money, labour there being cheap in proportion.

In the Vernon district there were plenty of charming ranches, but I found on inquiry that they were often the property of people who had private means, and therefore were not dependent on their labour for a livelihood—in fact only one man was quoted to me as having made a fortune in fruit, and I discovered that he had bought his land very cheaply before the “boom,” and had sold the greater part of it at a high rate. I must also confess that Canadians were critical of the English fruit-growers, as they say that they spend many a working hour in playing tennis, and by no means come up to the dour ideal of “all work and no play.”

A North-country man who drove me to the Coldstream ranch, with its acres and acres of beautifully tended apple trees, told me that he had been three years in the Dominion, had turned his hand to many occupations, and hoped to start fruit-farming soon on his own land. “‘Making good’ in Canada means lots of hard work,” he remarked, “and I often think that too much is made of the successes, for I never hear anyone talk about the hundreds of failures who have left the country. I have come across men from public schools and the Universities who are just day-labourers here, and never will be anything better.”

"Would you care to go back to the Old Country, then?" I inquired.

"Certainly not, except on a visit to see my people. There is work and to spare here for all who can do it. It is not like England, where every man is ready to cut another man's throat, just to get his job."

Again and again cases were brought to my notice of the folly of paying premiums to farmers to teach fruit-farming, or indeed anything else, to British youths, as every strong, handy lad is well worth his board and lodging, however inexperienced he may be. A public-school man told me of a school-friend of his, whose relatives had paid a Canadian farmer to teach him all about fruit-farming. He found on his arrival that there was no ranch, only a small orchard; he had to sleep in a shack on the floor, wrapped in his own rugs, no bedding of any kind being provided; he was not well fed, and the family hardly spoke to him. Another word of warning, given me by many, was never to buy land in Canada without seeing it, and never to risk money in any of the various fruit-growing Companies that are so widely advertised in England.

Certainly this long valley, with its lake scenery, is most lovely, and I was delighted with its profusion of wild flowers. Lupin everywhere, three or four



kinds of clover, yellow daisies with velvety brown centres, corn-cockles, tall mulleins, and forget-me-nots; but not a single buttercup or daisy lifted their familiar little faces to the blazing sunshine. Masses of small mauve asters mingled with vetch, pink mallow, and the rose flush of the willow-herb, while in the wooded parts syringa bushes were in full bloom, their gusts of perfume overpowering the delicate sweetness of countless pink wild roses. The birds were singing lustily, and orioles and blue birds flew about, making lovely flashes of colour—in fact the whole place was a kind of Earthly Paradise, serpent and all, for I was told to beware of rattlesnakes in the long grass.

From the Okanagan I made my way to Vancouver, a very hot journey. On leaving Sicamous we seemed to be hours in going round the vast and lonely Shuswap Lake, with its great arms; then came the Thompson River, flowing between high flat-topped sand-cliffs, an arid region with a stony soil. As we passed through Kamloops we were told that it was 105 degrees in the shade that day, and this I could well believe. Then came a stretch of gloomy and desolate country, until we reached the Fraser River, with gloriously wild scenery, here and there the water swirling and foaming at the foot of stupendous gorges.

The trains went slowly when they followed the



windings of the rivers, and the lines were laid in huge curves. At these points the outer rails were higher than the inner, in order to prevent derailing, so that sometimes we seemed to be tipping over, in a way that made a few of the passengers quite unwell.

At some parts the shaking was violent, and on one occasion I was flung forward and bruised considerably, being informed by a fellow-traveller that one of his friends had had a limb broken from this cause.

When the thirsty-looking Dry Belt was left behind us, we ran into a beautiful land of mountain and lake, river and marsh; but it was also a land where the mosquito was a curse, and I pitied the railwaymen at Mission Junction, who were all wearing blue gauze veils and gloves. The horrible little insects invaded the train here, and for the rest of the journey the passengers were in a state of irritation bordering on fury.

Before this invasion, I had become friendly with some of my fellow-travellers. One pleasant Canadian was interested in the object of my tour, and said that Englishwomen were usually much liked in Canada, but that he could not recommend the life of a home-help to anyone brought up as a lady. "The life is that of a drudge," he said, "and the woman who undertakes it becomes a drudge," and I agreed with him. He complained that Englishmen were often

most unadaptable, saying that once he gave an English clerk in his office a letter to copy. The document had the word waggon spelt *à l'Américaine* with one g, and not only did the man spell it in the copy with two g's, but he actually corrected the word in his employer's letter. My companion also told me that a firm known to him had got some excellent millers out from England, but, as they entirely refused to adopt Canadian methods, they had to be dismissed. A Canadian editor said much the same thing, amusing me with an anecdote of an English waiter, who, when reproved for not conforming to some Canadian custom, retorted, "As you all belong to us, you ought to do as *we* please!"<sup>1</sup>

This acquaintance considered that Canada was greatly in need of culture, as the main, if not the sole, subject of conversation was the "almighty dollar," and he thought that an influx of educated British women with high ideals would do much to raise many a standard.

Though personally I met with nothing but kindness from the day I landed to the day I left the Dominion, yet I sometimes came across members of

<sup>1</sup> I often noticed that Canadians were apt to classify the Britisher into Scotch, Irish or English, frequently reserving their approval for the first-named.

the party who talk of "Canada for the Canadians," and speak of the British race as effete. To this I always had the same answer. I agreed promptly that we English must be effete, and I judged this to be so from the fact that we have possessed ourselves of, and continue to rule, one-fifth of the whole world! Of course the refusal to ratify the Reciprocity Agreement showed that an overwhelming majority in Canada dreaded the very suspicion of a problematic annexation by America in the future; but the influx of Americans and foreigners is so great, that every British woman, worthy of the name, who settles in the Dominion is, as it were, a standard of Empire, and if, as is probable, she marries, she will train her children to love the Union Jack.

And so—

"We rode the iron stallions down to drink  
Through the cañons to the waters of the West!"

and at last reached big, bustling, prosperous Vancouver, with its fine town hall and handsome public buildings, its good shops and comfortable hotels, and it was impossible to believe that this beautifully situated city was twenty-five years ago a mass of burnt wooden shacks. I found myself in luxury at Glencoe Lodge, served by picturesquely clad Chinese, and sent out my letters of introduction, my new acquaintances

being, as everywhere, most kind, interesting themselves in the objects of my mission, and in many cases giving me valuable information. It seemed wonderful to me to be living beside the Pacific Ocean, to reach which I had travelled some 3500 miles from Quebec, and I never ceased admiring the splendid scenery, the island-dotted sea, ranges of beautiful peaks, and masses of giant pines silhouetted against a deep blue July sky. Stanley Park, about a thousand acres in extent, and lapped by the sea, was a superb playground for the city, and I duly visited the mighty trees that rose straight as arrows, one huge pine being 222 feet in height, and a veteran cedar measuring 47 feet in girth. I was warned, more than once, never to go off the main roads, as modern highwaymen, intent on plunder, are said to lurk in the alluring-looking by-paths.

I spent one afternoon in a visit to the Grand Canyon, a ferry, tramway, and motor conveying my friend and me to a glorious gorge, which might well have been in the heart of the Rockies, so remote did it seem from all civilisation ; I also went out to Point Grey, the beautiful peninsula now being laid out as a suburb of Vancouver, and was motored one day to South Vancouver, our drive being a series of jolts and bumps on the roughest of roads. Here the charred



stumps of lofty pines looked pitiable objects among the bracken and willow-herb, and the frame-built houses being erected in all directions seemed a sorry exchange for the primeval forest. Mighty roots had been heaved up and were standing right out of the ground, and here and there were great fragments of trees, shattered and broken with dynamite ; tram lines and water pipes were being laid down with astonishing celerity, men and horses working with a will, and the stir and life that accompanied this task of evolving order out of what seemed chaos, was most inspiring, and reminded me of Service's lines in *The Younger Son* :—

“And where Vancouver's shaggy ramparts frown,  
When the sunlight threads the pine gloom he is fighting might  
and main  
To clinch the rivets of an Empire down.”

From Vancouver I made the four hours' steamer trip to Victoria, the capital of British Columbia, a most beautiful journey, landlocked most of the way, past a splendid coast line and myriads of rocky islands. The difference between Victoria and Vancouver was striking. The one all bustle and progress, the other quiet, if not sleepy ; the one so spick and span, with crowds of people in the streets, up-to-date shops, and expensively dressed women whirling about in motors ; the other with certainly



some fine erections, such as the Parliament buildings, but many shabby residences and untidy corners in the streets, English goods in the shops, English harness on the horses, and with a curiously home-like air as of an English country town. In the Vancouver post office there were about six pigeon-holes labelled with different letters of the alphabet for the delivery of letters, and I had always to stand one of a long line before that marked R-Z, but here in Victoria there were only two, and I had hardly ever to wait ; here at the newspaper office, where I had sent an advertisement offering myself as home-help on a chicken ranch, a boy took a few letters out of a drawer and looked through them to see if any were marked with my number, very different from the Winnipeg and Calgary offices, where each advertiser had his or her particular box ; in Vancouver I had to beware of trams and motors as I crossed the road, but here the streets seemed half empty in comparison. Everyone falls in love with Victoria, that city of pretty homes and beautiful gardens, and I saw plenty of elderly people, so conspicuous by their absence on the prairie ; while on Sunday, at the Cathedral service, the old ladies appeared in bonnets and mantles of unmistakable English style, taking my thoughts to my own country church so far away.

As usual, all to whom I had introductions were anxious to help me, and I was taken various motor drives in different parts of the lovely island that is, as yet, not fully explored. We drove through forests, had exquisite peeps of sea, lake, and mountain, passed by chicken farms and fruit-ranches, and admired the charming residences in and about Victoria. These invariably have beautiful gardens, their velvet lawns and riotous masses of flowers giving a thoroughly home-like feeling, while the great grey boulders, that cropped out constantly from the soil, were often covered with ivy, or turned into fascinating rock-gardens.

One afternoon I was taken on the Observation Car, a great institution, to see the well-laid-out parks among many other things, and we also visited Esquimalt Harbour, where the cruiser *Rainbow* is the only reminder of the Pacific fleet that formerly lay in the fine harbour.

In old days Victoria had been a Crown Colony, a lady, whose grandfather had played a great part in the past, telling me that in those bygone times sailing ships that went by way of Cape Horn, brought letters and parcels to the settlers only once a year.

Later on the mails came by way of San Francisco and took a month, and it was a great event when

the Canadian Pacific Line linked Quebec with Vancouver, surmounting the tremendous barrier of the Rockies, and bringing the East into touch with the West.

Partly owing to this long isolation, and probably due in great measure to the splendid climate, the Crown officials used frequently to settle down for life on Vancouver Island, which in some respects is *plus loyaliste que le roi*.

During my stay I made a flying visit up to lovely Duncans, an English colony in the interior, situated in the midst of most romantic scenery. Grouse, quail, partridge, and pheasant appeared to be in profusion, and I was told that there were deer innumerable in the pine woods, also bear, panthers, and wolves, while trout abounded in the streams, making the island a perfect hunter's paradise. Here all seemed to do their own work with the aid of lady-helps, who had, I was assured, a pleasant life, as they were made one of the family, belonged to the tennis club, and were always taken to the frequent winter dances. I tried to get a post as a "temporary" on the island, in order to judge of this by practical experience, but I failed to do so, as I could only promise to stay for a month, and my would-be employer not unnaturally wanted permanency.

The climate is magnificent, rather warmer than in the south of England, but never unpleasantly hot ; it is said to rain usually at night, a most convenient proceeding, the winters are short and pleasant, and the good roads never impassable. In parts it is much like the Austrian Tyrol, with wild chasms, pines, and bracken, and it was curious to come upon groups of Indians in such scenery, a queer-looking race, more akin to the Japanese than to the Redskin of the Continent. The Indian reserves comprise some of the best land in the island, and Canada has treated her aborigines so well that she has never had an Indian war.

And now it was time to turn my face Eastwards, and I had a keen regret at bidding farewell to the far West and beautiful British Columbia, but I felt that my experiences would be incomplete unless I could obtain further glimpses of life on chicken ranch or prairie farm.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIFE ON A CHICKEN RANCH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

POULTRY-FARMING is constantly mentioned as being a good opening for educated women wishing to earn their livelihood in Canada, and while I was in the Dominion I was lucky enough to become the guest for ten days of a young English couple who were running a chicken ranch.

Mr. and Mrs. Bent, as I shall call them, were full of enthusiasm, and were working their farm on approved up-to-date methods, so I felt that I could not have come to a better place for information.

The ranch was situated not far from Vancouver, and was a nine-acre clearing in the midst of the lovely primeval forest, where spruce, hemlock, cedar, fir, and pine raised their lofty heads, alas, all too soon to be turned into unsightly blackened stumps, one of the signs of the progress of civilisation about here.

My host, accompanied by a friendly bull-terrier, met me at the electric tram which connects the village with Vancouver and New Westminster, and drove me to his pretty bungalow. At first my hostess wanted



to treat me as a guest, but I had not served my apprenticeship as a home-help for nothing, and insisted on sharing the work, beginning by lending a hand with the evening meal, after which we all three sallied forth to put dozens of young Leghorn pullets to bed.

These tiresome birds were in the habit of roosting anywhere but in the right places, and would have fallen a prey to rats, minks, or racoons had they not been looked after. Night after night we "bedded down" the fowls, and I enjoyed the work when it was fine, and the moon and stars were shining in a sky of purple velvet. But one evening it was raining hard, and we had to make our rounds clad in waterproofs, giving me some idea of what the work would be like during the winter.

Though early in August, it was quite dark, and as the ground had only lately been cleared of the big firs, it was full of holes and inequalities. Here and there were stumps not yet rooted up, or bits of lumber, or a long hose-pipe like a snake, and worst of all, many of the tree-roots were twisted into big loops. I caught my foot in one of these once and nearly fell headlong, but luckily saved myself for I was clasping three pullets at the moment! There were also stones in abundance, nasty snags, and small patches of bracken

in unexpected places, so, if possible, I was always the bearer of the little lantern, and Mrs. Bent assured me that she had had many a bad tumble before she had learnt to know the ground.

First a round of the "brooders" would be made to see that the lamps were all lit and working properly, and that most of the tiny chickens were safely housed. Then one or two motherly old hens, sitting on the ground with a score apiece of little white balls tucked under their wings, would be visited and enclosed in small wire-netting pens, over which mackintosh would be drawn to keep them safe from rain or animal. This done, we would betake ourselves to the fowl-pens, where dozens of heedless pullets had to be picked up from the sandy ground dotted with fronds of bracken, that concealed many a hole from the unwary, and put into sacks. These I would hold open, and when all were collected, we would carry the sleepy birds carefully and put them into the various boxes prepared for their reception. These young Leghorns were particularly fond of roosting on the floor of the big barn, a dangerous spot, as the grain kept there attracted so many rats, and the birds were most difficult to catch, except with a net that both Mr. and Mrs. Bent wielded with great skill. Even with the net it was a lengthy process, as they

seemed to be gifted with almost superhuman agility, so one evening the fiat went forth that their wings must be clipped. I held bird after bird, while husband and wife cut the feathers of the right wing until some two hundred lusty pullets were operated upon and deposited in the sacks, the chase and capture affording us quite an exciting hour's sport.

My host was trying to get his stock up to a thousand birds, and calculated that a good hen laid about two hundred eggs per annum, and ought to be worth eight shillings a year to her owner. He kept Leg-horns for the most part, as being the best breed for laying, getting 2s. a dozen in Vancouver for his eggs during the summer, and in winter 3s. to 4s., while table-fowls were profitable, and his cockerels found a ready sale at the hotels as "roasters."<sup>1</sup> There were, however, a good many drawbacks, hawks and rats being constant enemies to the chickens. Mr. Bent shot several of the former, as the old hens always warned him of their approach by uttering a curious cry; but the rats were more difficult to circumvent as they worked by night, and on one occasion killed over fifty chickens, hiding the corpses in a little drain to which the victims were traced by their feathers.

<sup>1</sup> In 1912 fowls fed for table fetched 35 c. (1s. 5½d.) the pound, "roasters" the same, and spring chickens were as much as 45 c. (1s. 10½d.) the pound.

Many pullets were foolish enough to dispute the meal with the pigs, that soon acquired a taste for fowl, and got in the habit of snapping up and devouring any unwary birds that perched on their troughs.

It is considered a good average if fifty per cent. of the chickens reach maturity, for they die so easily, poor little things, in spite of every care. If one of them hurts its foot and it bleeds, the others all rush upon it and peck at the wound, the blood seeming to excite them to a kind of passion. They are troubled by various diseases, to prevent some of which their drinking water is specially doctored, and they must be carefully guarded from damp and cold.

My host was emphatically a "man of his hands," and I never ceased admiring his energy. He built his hen-houses, his barn, and his stables, and carted great beams of wood from the trees he had felled, to saw them up into logs for the greedy kitchen-stove with the help of a little wood-cutting engine, and ground up bones for his fowls with another implement. He cleaned out his hen-houses every other day, dug up and disinfected the runs, and once a week drove his waggon into New Westminster, to return laden with sacks of grain, bones, chicken-food, and so on for his big family.

Every Friday he went into Vancouver to sell his eggs, this necessitating an early start. They were



beautifully packed, free from every speck of dirt, and carefully graded as to colour—brown, buff, cream, and white all in separate boxes. Whilst I was at the ranch I used to wash the eggs for market, Mr. Bent being most particular as to their appearance, and often I was obliged to have recourse to Dutch Cleanser to remove any stains that would not yield to ordinary water, as if left, they would mark the white albumen within the egg.

Besides the fowls, my host had to feed and water his pigs twice a day, and of course look after his faithful horse. Throughout my tour I heard again and again what “paying” animals pigs were, and in this case they were useful in other ways, for they cleared the ground, rooting up the bracken in their enclosure, which had, however, to be strongly fenced to keep them from rampaging in the garden. This latter was a boon to the housekeeper, for it produced peas, cabbages, lettuces, beans, vegetable marrows, and rhubarb, not to speak of sweet peas and mignonette, and one day I observed my host at the tiresome task of tying up and staking many dozens of sturdy tomato plants: he would blow up a tree at any odd time, and usually had a bonfire going in which to burn old tree-roots and rubbish.

Mrs. Bent was almost as fully occupied as her



husband. Her house was beautifully clean and well kept, her stove brightly polished, and she had to prepare four meals a day, afternoon-tea being included in their menu, and also make her own bread. Once a week she scrubbed out her large kitchen and pantry (probably she will have recourse to covering the floor with linoleum later on, or painting it), on Monday she did the household wash, and Tuesday was ironing-day.

Most women would consider that her house gave her occupation and to spare, especially as she was dainty in her table appointments and always had flowers in the pretty living room, but she did almost as much on the ranch as her husband. The stock had to be fed, and needed water at frequent intervals, this being mixed with a few grains of permanganate of potash as a disinfectant, and clover had to be gathered daily at some little distance from the house to provide green food for the hens which were shut up in runs. The fowls were fed three times a day, twice with grain, and their "balanced ration" (a mixture of grain, meal, powdered green food and ground-up bone), was given them in the evening, while the chickens required five meals. She also washed and packed the eggs for market, put the chickens into "brooders" for the night, and lit the lamps to keep

their shelters up to the right temperature, and on occasion she would chop up logs to feed the insatiable stove, wielding an axe with skill, and making me feel ashamed that I never got much beyond splitting up kindling wood with this weapon, so dangerous in unaccustomed hands.

Though she never grumbled, yet to me her life seemed lacking in relaxation. She and her husband could not leave the ranch together, unluckily she had no congenial neighbours close at hand (they were of the English labouring type), and as her chief friends lived at a distance, she did not care to go and see them by herself—in fact, I believe that during my visit she went farther afield than she had done since her marriage.

To balance this, she was young and full of hope, there was the possibility that people of her own class might settle near them later on, and more than all, the encouraging sense that she and her husband were making their way in the world together, and that their efforts had every prospect of being crowned with success.

During my visit in August I was full of praise of the fine climate, though I felt absurdly slack and sleepy at first, as I had come so lately from the tonic air farther east. But my hostess had another tale

to tell of the winter with its rainy season, to which, according to one Englishwoman whom I met, it takes three years to become accustomed. When the ground was covered with snow she used to struggle to the creek for water, scrambling down a slippery path to the stream with her pails, and she had to tend her incubators and chickens in deluges of rain and seas of slush. But now the Bents have the luxury of water laid on in their bungalow, and the palatial hen-house and runs which Mr. Bent was building during my visit, will save those evening rambles after recalcitrant fowls.

One day, when my host had gone off to the town for fodder, we women had to catch a hundred or so of pullets that had got into the barn and deposit them in pens. Although this was after their wings had been clipped, yet the birds were active as mice on their feet, and both of us were quite exhausted when we had at last cornered and caught all of them, putting about a dozen at a time carefully into sacks which we carried off to empty into the pens. After this came the feeding and watering of the entire stock, and during this occupation we became suddenly aware that a big sow had broken loose and was coming towards us. Both of us, I confess it, were terrified, as these animals were reputed to be fierce, and we were alone on the premises. However, it ran up

to the enclosures where were the boar and various sows and piglets, and Mrs. Bent conceived the bright idea of driving it into an outhouse, as if allowed to wander it would assuredly root up the potato patch, not to speak of devastating the cabbages and cauliflowers. Accordingly we hurriedly pulled all the sacks of grain and bran out of this building, and my hostess put a pail of pig-wash on the threshold. As soon as the sow reappeared, we rather nervously headed it towards this place, and to our joy, attracted by the bucket, it went three parts inside the door, whereupon Mrs. Bent boldly advanced and gave it a resounding thwack with her stick on its hind quarters. Any decent animal would have started forward in a fright, but this creature turned sharply round and rushed out, while we fled precipitately to the house! I kept an eye on the vagrant from the back-door, while my hostess went to the front and produced somewhat discordant sounds on a trumpet in order to call the nearest neighbour to her assistance; but as no one came she ran to his house, and returned shortly, accompanied by Mr. Gray, armed with a big stick. I had not thought much of this neighbour before, but when I saw how the sow "minded" him (it had treated us with the utmost contempt!), and how skilfully he herded it at last into its enclosure,



my opinion of him rose by leaps and bounds. The animal had got out by rolling a log aside, and we women helped at piling up stones and a tree-trunk against this, feeling very brave as soon as the truant was safely inside. Mr. Gray explained that he had heard the braying of the trumpet, but as he knew that Mrs. Bent had a friend with her, he imagined that she was giving me a lesson on that instrument, hence his delay in coming to the rescue !

He cheerfully informed us that a convict had broken loose from the penal establishment not far from here, and had begged for food from houses near to his; but this news left us calm, for when you have little or nothing to lose, a possible highwayman is not of much account. A Canadian told me that most women conceal their cash in their stockings, and that some years ago, when a train was held up by bandits, every woman was forced to take off her hose, which the men carried away. " Only one girl saved her money," went on my informant, " and where do you think she had hidden it ? Why, in her ' rats ' ! " I must explain that the term " rats " is used for artificial hair, and at Calgary I heard an itinerant preacher urging the female portion of his audience to " fling away their ' rats ' " as savouring of worldly vanity, much as Savonarola might have done in Florence long ago.



It was rather thrilling to feel that all round the chicken ranch lay the great pine woods in which bears wander. As a rule they do people no harm, Bruin usually making off if he spies a human being, but if he stands his ground it is not wise to dispute the road with him unless the wayfarer be armed. On Mr. Bent's ranch was a creek with a dam that supplied water to the house, and here bears had been seen. This I could well believe, as the stream seemed to be in the heart of the primeval forest, and could only be approached by scrambling down a steep path through trees, the ground being always damp and boggy, and long "weepers" of moss hanging from the firs.

Across the water was a natural bridge, formed of the trunk of a huge cedar, once a giant of the woods, and from the moss and soil collected on its enormous girth, trees were growing—actually sturdy trees. It was an eerie spot, the silence brooding over it was quite uncanny, and the huge firs that rose on all sides made a soft twilight, the sun being only visible when I gazed far up to where it glinted through their boughs. I was shown the difference between pine and spruce, cedar and hemlock, the latter tree always having drooping leaders however high it may grow. The cedar is the best of all, as its beautiful red wood will

last for a century, and I saw Douglas pines shooting to a height of 150 to 200 feet, and was informed that 300 feet is the limit that is reached by these giants. They are now being laid low with a ruthlessness that went to my heart, alders springing up to replace these splendid monarchs of the forest, and the "fire weed" (willow herb), so called because it springs up whenever burning has taken place, appearing on the ground in great rose-hued patches. At intervals one heard the sound of blasting, a sign that some huge tree was being upheaved by the power of dynamite, its roots torn out of the ground, and all the valuable timber made into bonfires. This seemed an appalling waste, and "progress" here apparently meant acres of charred stumps. Yet it could not be helped, and there was something exhilarating in this wrestle of man with Nature in the wilderness, this effort of puny human beings to cut out a home for themselves in the vast forest, to wrench the soil from the grasp of the great trees and to force it to yield a livelihood. The pioneer, with his pluck, energy, and endurance, always aroused my sympathy, and my hope that a man, such as my host, who had gone through the storm and stress, might reap the reward.

A forest fire must be an awful though splendid sight, and one evening Mrs. Bent and I were startled

by observing a red glare behind the firs that shut in the ranch on all sides. We heard the crackling as the flames burnt up the wood, and shivered at the thought that if they came towards us there would be no possibility of saving the stock or the bungalow, and that in all probability we should have some difficulty in escaping ourselves, so rapidly do the flames leap from tree to tree. A man, who had been "burnt out" himself, told me that his house was a mass of charred timbers in twenty minutes, and that it had been impossible to save any of his household gods from the flames. It was a lovely night and the full moon was riding in a purple sky, but the broad rosy flush in the east had something menacing about it, the crackle of the flames making me think of some great beast of prey lapping up the blood of one victim while it lusted for more and yet more food. It was a relief when a couple of men, who had business with Mr. Bent, assured us that the fire was merely a huge bonfire of waste wood, and yet when I went to bed, I could not refrain from thinking how awful a fate it would be to be caught in a big forest fire, such as had taken place in Ontario that same summer. On these occasions the great firs blaze like monster torches, and in the summer drought, or if a wind be blowing, the conflagration

cannot be checked by human agency, but springs, a veritable demon of destruction, across wide open spaces to reach its prey, the tall, straight, resinous pines.

A woman, who had been driven from her home by one of these terrible visitations, told me that though she and her husband saved themselves by timely flight, yet they lost all they had in the world and had to begin life again; and their nearest neighbours, a family of nine in number, were surrounded, and perished in the flames.

But let us turn to a lighter subject, illustrating one of the experiences of the housekeeper in Canada. It was a day when Mr. Bent was in Vancouver, and my hostess and I set to work to scrub out the kitchen and pantry. Of course I took my share of the housework during my visit, and I confess that it filled me with pride when Mrs. Bent praised my culinary and other efforts, wondering how it was that I had learnt to do so many things in the Canadian manner. I did not betray that I had already been a home-help more than once, and had not altogether wasted my opportunities—in fact I only gave myself away once in Canada, and then the temptation was irresistible. It was in this manner. A Canadian had talked to me in the train, and, as usual, I tried to interest my travelling



companion in the objects of my journey. "Well, I should say that if you want to gain real, first-hand information, you ought to take a post as a home-help yourself," was his comment, and I shall never forget his look of astonishment when I answered calmly,

"Yesterday I left my third post as home-help, and am now on my way to look for fresh work."

But I have wandered from my point. Mrs. Bent and I had breakfasted at seven o'clock that morning, and after the wash-up and the usual feeding and watering of the fowls, we set-to at our scrubbing, the many pantry-shelves and cupboards being cleansed at the same time. At last all was done, it was past eleven, and we intended to have a rest from our labours and partake of a bread-and-butter-and-jam lunch an hour later in order to save us the bother of cooking, when suddenly visitors turned up quite unexpectedly. A lunch had to be got together somehow. A tongue was opened (what a stand-by these are in out-of-the-way places!), eggs were scrambled, and a batch of scones made as soon as we could get the stove, which we had allowed to go out, lit and heated. I remember that after this meal had been discussed and the crockery and cutlery had been washed, I slipped off to my room for a little siesta, and to my horrified surprise knew nothing further till afternoon-tea-



time, when I reappeared much refreshed, but feeling rather guilty at having given Mrs. Bent no help with the entertainment of her guests.

One day I was driven into New Westminster, the oldest settlement in British Columbia, the inhabitants of which say that it ought to have been chosen for the capital of the province, as it is finely situated on the Fraser River, with miles of water frontage. According to the story, Victoria on Vancouver Island was selected because a meeting was being held there at the time, and of course, at that date, the big, rich, progressive Vancouver of to-day was merely a little lumber town of no account. We reached the city by a hilly road with plenty of loose stones lying about, and Mrs. Bent had to drive with care when we came to a dangerous place where the tram and railway lines met. We passed sawmills, with their huge piles of stacked-up lumber, a big machine factory, a salmon-canning works, to which we saw men carrying enormous fish, and across the river was visible the largest sawmill in the world: the broad main street had plenty of good shops and some handsome buildings, but it had none of the stir and bustle that so characterises its mushroom rival Vancouver.

I was very sorry when the time came for me to leave the Bents, and as I got into the waggon beside

Mr. Bent, and drove off to an accompaniment of squeaks and squeals from a couple of small pigs confined in a packing-case behind us, I felt that this was the close of a pleasant episode in my Canadian tour. It had left me with the conviction that poultry-farming would be a profitable undertaking for active women with a little capital, who would work in partnership. They must be capable, all-round girls, accustomed to make the best of things, and, of course, properly trained for the work. Let no elderly woman, who has looked after the fowls in England with a boy under her to do all the rough work, think that she will "make good" in the Dominion, unless she is exceptionally vigorous and adaptable. Canada is the Land of Youth and Hope. Everyone seems to have a sense of the great openings and possibilities there are in the country, and this helps the new-comers to tide over many a rough bit ; but the life is not an easy one in many ways, and the hardships would be intolerable to a middle-aged woman wedded to English comforts. The work on a chicken ranch is constant, and outside distractions would be few, for girls must be prepared to do everything themselves, as hired help is most expensive and would eat up all their profits.

A Canadian authority on poultry-farming said that this industry, to be really paying, should be carried

on in connection with a farm, because then the birds could be fed with much that would otherwise be thrown away. It would be a good plan for a girl, who had had some experience in England, to go for a course of poultry-raising, either at Guelph College in Ontario, if she intended to settle east of the Rockies, or at Pullman College in Washington, U.S.A., if British Columbia were her goal. At present the demand for poultry and eggs far exceeds the supply, and this pleasant state of things for the producer will probably increase with the population.

## CHAPTER IX

### MY THIRD POSITION AS HOME-HELP

THE neighbourhood to which I now betook myself was supposed to be one that afforded great openings for the home-help, and I felt sure that I should speedily find a post.

As usual, I went to insert my advertisement in the newspaper, and when the editor heard my errand he gave me an address to which to write, and pointed out a situation that might suit me in last week's issue. Would I take a place where there were many children? Remembering how tired I had got of the perpetual clamour of the juvenile Browns in my last post, I frankly confessed that I preferred their absence to their presence. With that he looked at me with the most reproachful face, and without a ghost of a smile exclaimed, "And you a woman!"

I should like to have inquired whether he had any of his own!

I was put into touch with a lady who, I was told, might possibly help me to get what I wanted, and she kindly gave me an interview. She said that she had

spoken to two or three of her friends about my case, but that I must not dream of being treated as one of the family in this district, and must have my meals apart, and so on.

I answered that I had heard that lady-helps were much in request in the neighbourhood, but this she denied emphatically. "They are only wanted on the prairie or in lonely places, but here we have our own friends, and wish to have our family life to ourselves." I quite saw the matter from her point of view, as I should much dislike to have an unknown stranger as part of my home circle, but all the same my heart sank as she continued, "Of course, if you got on really well with your mistress, she might relax her rule and admit you to a partial intercourse in time, but, believe me, you will be *far* happier if you will take a situation as a general servant," and with that she dismissed me.

I felt absurdly depressed as I walked away, but, as had happened again and again during my journey, an unexpected piece of kindness came to cheer me up. A ramshackle shandrydan, drawn by a donkey, and with a ladder sticking out behind, rattled along the road, and in it sat an old man and a boy. "I suppose you wouldn't care to accept a lift?" said the aged Jehu.



"Indeed, I should be very grateful for one," was my reply, and I scrambled awkwardly enough into what is known as a "democrat." The old man had come, in his youth, from a part of England that I knew, and inquired most kindly as to my business in the neighbourhood. He urged me to call at every ranch in the district and offer my services; but though I did not feel equal to doing this, his spontaneous sympathy was most cheering, and by the time I had extricated myself from his funny little trap my forlorn feeling had quite vanished.

An English woman whom I shall call Mrs. Downton, appeared to engage my services, and I asked for details of the work. She wished me to do all the cooking and cleaning of the house, and look after her children on two afternoons of the week. Could I have a room to myself, an hour or two off during the afternoon, and should I be treated as one of the family? I asked. She agreed to all these conditions, but her whole manner was that of a superior to one vastly her inferior, and I saw at once that I was "up against" the English "caste" system.

As I had been "one of the family," almost more than I wished, elsewhere, I wondered how it would feel to be treated as a menial, and I prudently offered my services for just a week if she cared to accept

them for so short a period. As she was hard up for help at the time she agreed, and offered me wages at the rate of fifteen dollars (£3) a month.

The time of my arrival coincided with the departure of the last "girl," and the leave-taking between mistress and maid was anything but cordial. Mrs. Downton then led me into the kitchen, and, pointing to a paper fastened to the door, said, "Here are my rules for the work of each day," and showed me my room, comfortable save for the lack of a chair or any place to put my things, except a few nails on the door, and told me to prepare supper as soon as I had taken off my hat and jacket.

This was eaten at seven o'clock in the dining-room, and, in my capacity as lady-help, I sat at table with the husband and wife and the "man," a depressed youth, who never opened his lips. As Mr. Downton, kind and pleasant from first to last, was conversationally inclined, I quite forgot my inferior position, and chatted away during the meal, though I had had rather a blow as I entered the room. "Does she eat with us?" had been the remark of Master Tom, the elder hope of the family, and he stared at me, greatly surprised, as I took my place!

I cleared away after supper, and during the washing-up Mrs. Downton looked into the kitchen and asked

very stiffly whether I would care to sit with them in the drawing-room. I politely declined this honour, and immediately my employer's manner became less glacial, so great was her relief, poor woman, and indeed I could sympathise with her. This was the first and last occasion that I was invited to enter the family circle, save at meal-time.

Next morning I was in the kitchen by half-past five to start preparing the breakfast. To my relief the stove behaved well, and I lit it with no trouble (here, as in many parts of Canada, only wood was used), and set about cooking porridge and bacon, making toast and laying the table. All was ready by half-past six, and the family assembled.

When I got into the dining-room (I was always a little late, as I had to wash my hands and remove my apron after dishing-up) everyone was eating busily and there was no chair for me. I straightway forgot that I was a home-help, and was greatly annoyed at the discourtesy of the men. "May I have a seat, please?" I asked in a tone that brought them to their feet in a second, and Mr. Downton rushed into another room to supply my need!

When breakfast was cleared away, I started on my daily round of sweeping. Carpets had to be cleaned with one implement, the linoleum and matting

had a special broom, and the rooms with only bare boards another. Then all the skirting had to be wiped round with a dry cloth, and it was in vain that I begged leave to use a damp one, as the dust merely flitted from one place to settle in another. After this operation I was told to do the bedrooms, and when they were finished it was time to peel potatoes for dinner and supper, and to begin preparing the substantial midday meal.

That over, and the washing-up accomplished, I made a cake and blancmange for supper, and, as it was now four o'clock, I was allowed my freedom for an hour and a half. A good part of this precious time was occupied with my toilet (it was very cursory in the mornings), and then I rested as I had a "crick" in my back. A friend was expected to supper that evening, so we had soup, fish, meat, and sweets, and I had to change the plates, bring in the dishes, and wash up the fish plates to do duty for the pudding course, as the crockery ran short.

My fellow-hireling and I were left entirely out of the conversation—not that my employers were in the least unkind, it was merely that we were dependents and therefore did not count.

During my stay I met a home-help who spoke enthusiastically of the way in which her employer



treated her, but on inquiry I found that the lady was a Canadian, and therefore had not the British "caste" ideas. My acquaintance assured me that she would not have been treated as well as she was in any other household in that district, and said that she would dissuade all girls from coming to this particular neighbourhood as lady-helps, and I quite agreed with her.

Certainly the English do not always appear to understand the home-help in the way that the Canadians do, the reason being that she is not a British institution.

A girl I met, who was acting in that capacity to an English family in another part of the Dominion, told me that not only was she cook, parlour-maid, and housemaid combined, but that she had actually to wait upon the children's nurse, a woman socially much her inferior.

The master of the house came home for week-ends, and during his spare time used to chop up a quantity of wood which he imagined would last until his return. As it only held out for three or four days, my poor friend was reduced to "grovelling about" for fuel, as she expressed it, before preparing any meal, and not only had she to cook and serve the usual three meals a day, but this family insisted on having a substantial afternoon tea with cakes and scones.



The lady of the house gave her no help in any way, very unlike most Canadians, and she was sure that had she stayed on for any length of time her health would have broken down, and she herself would have lost all care for her personal appearance. The poor girl looked perfectly worn out when I met her, and said that she wished she could send her experiences to some magazine, in order to warn girls against going as home-helps unless their posts were carefully selected for them.

She had come out from England full of hope, and had imagined that her work would have been varied with social distractions, such as tennis, driving, or dances. Certainly, as there are ten men to one woman west of Winnipeg, she was not unreasonable in her expectation of some amusement, but, unluckily she was thoroughly disappointed, and the Dominion had no charms for her.

The Canadian air is so bracing that I rolled out of bed at five o'clock every morning without much effort; and though I was certainly tired in the evening (Mrs. Downton's place was considered in the neighbourhood to be a hard one), yet I slept so well that it did not matter. The "man," who worked on the farm, brought in wood and water every morning and emptied a kerosene can, which served as a receptacle for

kitchen refuse. He slept in a tent near the house, and it was surprising how neat and clean he always looked in spite of a good deal of hard work. He and I, of course, became friendly at once, "a fellow-feeling . . ." and I was also sorry for him, as he seemed so depressed and shy.

I generally exchanged a few words with him while I stirred the porridge or fried the bacon for breakfast, and one morning he told me that he was going to try his luck elsewhere, and asked whether I were staying on. When I answered in the negative, he said fervently, "Oh, I was sure that this place would *never* suit you!" but I let the remark pass, as I did not want to discuss our joint employers in their own kitchen.

On Saturday I had to work my hardest, as not only were there special cleaning operations, but I had to cook everything for dinner and supper in order to devote myself to the baby during the afternoon when the Downtons went off to a party.

All instructions as to baby's bottles, his undressing and putting to bed were given to me, and I hoped to have a peaceful time reading and writing in the verandah, with the child sleeping in his "pram."

This programme, however, was by no means carried out. Baby was easily amused as I washed and put away the dinner things, but when the time

came for him to take his first bottle, there ensued frantic struggles, yells apparently of fury, and an unmistakable determination not to imbibe his milk and barley-water. Feeling that I was somehow in fault, I warmed the bottle again and again, and only after a weary hour with much rocking of the perambulator did he condescend to take some nourishment. This incident had spoilt his temper, so my ideas of reading or writing were quite dissipated, and I had to soothe his screams as best I could.

With the second bottle there ensued the same scene as the first, and in the middle of it all little Tom came howling to me to say that the two dogs were killing a sweet little kitten that had been a real joy to me in the kitchen. Baby and bottle were deserted, and I rushed after the boy to the spot, to find the "man" already there and driving the dogs off, but, alas, it was too late. Tom had set the dogs again and again on one or other of the cats in spite of all that his parents and I could say, and now I turned upon him and "spoke my mind," only wishing that I could have whipped him soundly for his cruelty. I think, however, that the sight of poor kitty lying dead made a far greater impression than anything I could say, for though a mischievous boy, he was likeable in many ways.

Baby's yells made me hasten back to my charge, who had to be rocked and carried about until it was time to put him and Tom to bed, giving the latter his supper.

It was a great relief when my youngest charge finally dropped off to sleep, and when Mrs. Downton returned she discovered that she had put no sugar into his bottles, this omission amply accounting for his trying conduct. She was full of sympathy for her "poor darling," but had none for the home-help, who had passed a most harassing afternoon in consequence of her mistress's negligence. I wonder if that editor who reproved me had ever been in charge of an enraged baby?

On Sunday, the Day of Rest, though there was no possibility of going to church, I hoped to have part of the afternoon to myself, according to the arrangement when I was engaged, and I felt decidedly "put upon" as the servants say, when Mrs. Downton asked me to look after baby again, as she and her husband had another party on hand. She had the grace to apologise, but I replied, somewhat contemptuously I fear, "As I am only here for a week I will do anything you please, but if I were staying on I should certainly make conditions with you." My employer was a woman constitutionally unable to see things



from any point of view but her own, and I felt that any girl who went to her as a lady-help would have a dreary existence, all work and no play. There were guests invited to dinner twice during the week I was there, and though it did not matter to me, who was only playing a part, yet I could imagine some girl, every whit as well bred as her employer, washing up in the kitchen, and always debarred from the talk and laughter going on in the drawing-room. It would not be of much benefit to the help to know that dances and other kinds of social distractions took place, for Mrs. Downton would probably never dream of letting her have a share of any amusement.

When I arrived in her house a lady was staying there for two or three days, and apparently would have departed without any leave-taking if her hostess had not appeared somewhat unexpectedly. "Are you going off?" the latter inquired. "Yes, good-bye," was the laconic answer, and I felt that my own farewell would be much after the same pattern.

Up to now I had never done the washing of all the dishes and pots and pans alone. It is the usual kindly Canadian custom to share it, the home-help doing the washing and the mistress the drying. Here I had to wash up everything after each of the three meals, and I found it a very monotonous business,



and sympathised with the lady who asked another in the railway carriage, "Have you a great antipathy to washing?" the ensuing conversation revealing that it was not the cleansing of the person, but that of pots and pans to which she was alluding. Here, besides the usual greasy saucepans and frying-pans, were the pots in which the remains of baby's food turned to a gluey mass unless they were washed at once. My hands got ingrained with dirt, and my rubber gloves had played me false by tearing themselves somehow or other into ribbons, and my housemaid's gloves were useless for the wash-up. I shivered to look at my nails, which had got extremely brittle, besides being dirty, and from the first I was never free of a burn somewhere or other, and feared that one on my arm, where I brushed an almost red-hot stove-pipe, and another on the back of my hand, caused by steam from a big kettle, would remain as mementoes of my Canadian tour to the end of my days!

One morning I was rather pluming myself on having done the breakfast extra well, as I had made soda scones and fried the bacon to a turn; but pride had a fall, for the porridge was salt as brine. I had, with gross carelessness, shaken in salt from the bag instead of measuring it, and I felt terribly ashamed of myself for ruining the *pièce de résistance* of the meal.

To do them justice, my victims behaved most kindly, Mr. Downton merely asking me to taste my own share, and laughing when he saw my face of disgust, and Mrs. Downton saying that she had burnt the porridge more than once.

As my week drew to its close my mistress got more and more friendly, and I felt sorry for her, as I saw that in many ways her life was a hard one.

One evening she had an accident, which softened my heart towards her considerably. She was going with some food down into the cellar, which was used as larder and dairy, when a cracked step, that had always made me nervous, suddenly broke right across, and she and the pudding were precipitated to the bottom. Fortunately no bones were broken, though the poor thing was much bruised and shaken, yet marvellously plucky about her mishap.

She had not heard of anyone to replace me, and asked one day whether I knew of any agency to which she could apply for another lady-help. I told her bluntly that her place was only suitable for a general servant, but I could not help sympathising with her longing to get some one to whom she could confide her children, as she was badly in need of a holiday, the constant round of monotonous work beginning to tell upon her.

But, sorry as I was for her, yet I could not meet her half-way when she unbent, because I felt that any penniless girl, who had gone to her under the impression that she was to be treated as one of the family, would have had a rude awakening when she realised that she would never see anyone or be taken anywhere.

I had a small triumph on the last day, when she offered me something over and above my wages, because I had been "so good and kind and such a standby." Though I refused the extra money, yet I was gratified, and would have liked to have said something nice to her as we shook hands at parting; but before me rose a vision of the lot that she would mete out to any girl who might come to her as lady-help, and I hardened my heart and made my farewells cold and formal, though it went against the grain to do so.

## CHAPTER X

### A VISIT TO AN ALBERTA FARM

SOME English friends of mine, whom I will name Gibson, were starting their married life on a prairie farm, and had warmly invited me, to pay them a visit during my tour in Canada.

To reach them I had to rise at an unearthly hour, and as my Calgary hotel declined to provide breakfast, I had to get some food at a restaurant close to the station.

It was curious to be the only woman among a crowd of men, who were eating with true Canadian velocity, many seated on high revolving chairs at a counter. My hurried meal of as much coffee and bread and butter as I could consume only came to fivepence, and I was soon in the train, crossing the prairie, with views of the Rockies in the distance, the great peaks looking queerly shortened and unimpressive when seen cut off above the far horizon.

It was a hot day towards the end of August, and the train stopped for a quarter of an hour at each little station on this branch line, spinning the journey out

to an abnormal length before we drew up at my destination, merely a few frame houses on either side of a short street, and the usual white-painted wooden hotel. Young Mr. Gibson and a big deerhound met me with the buggy, and when my bag and hold-all were packed in behind, we started off on our nine-mile drive across the prairie by a good track, which we left now and again and took to the grass when we came to mud-holes. By and by we saw many acres of waving grain—wheat, oats, and barley—but all in sore need of the ripening sunshine. An undue amount of rain had fallen during the year, and as a consequence the hopes of the farmers in this district were almost at zero.

Several neat, little four-roomed houses were dotted about, and at last we drew up at the one belonging to my host, with a tent beside it, making an extra apartment, and I was warmly welcomed by his charming wife.

I was introduced to the team of fine Percheron greys, to the pretty mare which had conveyed me from the station, the Hereford cow, the pigs, turkeys, and fowls, and last, but by no means least, to two fascinating fox-terriers, and felt that it would be my own fault if I did not enjoy my visit to the full in such pleasant company. With characteristic energy, Mr. Gibson



had turned one of the rooms in his bandbox of a house into a store, and already the goods, bought at a wholesale shop in Calgary, were paying a handsome percentage, and at all hours people dropped in to buy bacon, canned foods, and many of the necessities of life, which they could obtain here at the same price as in the store of the little town nine miles away.

It was an amusement to me to serve occasionally behind the counter, and I found that the customers were scrupulously honest, boys, for instance, who came to buy sweets, watching the scales as I weighed, in order to check me directly I had put in the exact amount. They would then offer me their purchases of candy, saying, "Won't you have some?" with the most engaging courtesy, and then, donning their caps, they would swing out of the store and mount their ponies with the high-peaked Mexican saddles.

The kitchen, though small, was a miracle of neatness, and I never ceased admiring the manner in which Mrs. Gibson packed away all her pans and crockery, as tidily and in as small a space as they do on board ship.

The house was fitted with wire-netting doors and windows, but in spite of all precautions it was impossible to exclude the flies, which, in conjunction with the mosquitoes, are a perfect pest on the prairie.

During the summer months these insects hold high carnival, and no human, or rather Canadian invention, appears able to cope with them. *Indoors* the flies must be fought with incessantly. The horrible, sticky "tanglefoot" papers assisted in the crusade. At one place we shut all the doors and windows and sprayed the whole place with insect powder, but the result was disappointing; and we often tried to darken the house, and "shoo" out the invaders by means of waving cloths or fly-whisks. But the flies were always masters of the situation, owing to the fact that the door of the house opened directly into the kitchen, so that everyone entering was accompanied by a battalion of these small nuisances. *Outside* the mosquitoes were extremely active just before rain, and settled on my face and hands, biting viciously, if I ventured forth unprotected by a gauze veil. The poor cow used to retreat to the barn in order to escape from them; and though Mr. Gibson made a "smudge" for his horses (a kind of bonfire constructed to give out clouds of smoke), yet the tortured animals were driven nearly mad one day, and tore about the field, kicking up their heels in vain attempts to escape their tormentors. Mr. Blake, a young Englishman, who was engaged in a fencing contract for the Company that had organised the farms in this district, told me that

on one occasion he had had a terrible experience with mosquitoes. He was riding through a thinly populated district, and the insects rose in swarms, settling on him and his horse, neither man nor beast being protected in any way. The torture of the innumerable bites was quite indescribable, and both nearly went mad with pain, the horse galloping along blindly. Fortunately Mr. Blake came across a lonely farm, and he rushed into the house without ceremony to implore relief. The woman gave him a paste of baking powder to smear over the bites, and provided him with a veil and gloves, helping him to cover his horse with old sacks, and he rode on his way with a badly swollen face and neck. He said that he was thankful to have escaped so easily, as an acquaintance, who was obliged to spend the night in the open, got blood-poisoning from this cause, and hovered between life and death for some time after he reached the hospital.

Such experiences are not likely to occur to any woman, and, moreover, the mosquitoes decrease appreciably as soon as land is opened up to cultivation.

On my first evening at the farm I was given a lesson in milking the cow, luckily a very quiet animal, as I fear that my amateur efforts must have worried her considerably at first. She behaved, however, with exemplary patience, yielding her milk willingly to my

inexperienced fingers, and only once did she nearly kick over the bucket. But, indeed, this was hardly her fault, as the house-cat, which always took a great interest in the milking operations, had on this occasion suddenly leapt upon her back, startling her violently !

My hostess told me that she and her husband had had a terrible time in getting to their farm in March. They had set off from a town sixteen miles away, Mr. Gibson driving his greys in the waggon, that was loaded with their household goods, when a snowstorm came on and they were nearly lost on the prairie. She said that it was almost by a miracle that they found a track that led them to a farm, where they were obliged to stay until the snow allowed them to proceed. When they reached their own house at last, they found it bitterly cold work camping in an unused dwelling, and it took them some time to haul the rest of their belongings sixteen miles across the snow to their new residence. Unfortunately, the water in the well was so bad that both got ill from using it, and though the Company had promised to bore another well, yet during my visit in August the job had not yet been put in hand, and all the water had to be carried from a neighbouring farm, Mr. Gibson filling two big barrels at a time, which we used for ourselves and the animals with a certain amount of economy.



On the morning after my arrival I was awakened by the sound of loud talking, and found that I had slept till the abnormally late hour (on a prairie farm, at all events) of seven o'clock. It was pouring with rain, sheets of water descending, and the vast grey expanse all around looked rather depressing. While I was hastily dressing, Mrs. Gibson knocked at my door to say that she was called away to a poor neighbour who was just about to become a mother, and her husband was putting the mare into the buggy in order to drive her over. Neither of them had had any breakfast, but of course I promised that coffee, porridge, toast, and bacon should be ready when they came back. It was such a pleasure to feel that I could be of some use, and when they returned, wet and hungry, about nine o'clock, they were delighted to find a hot meal awaiting them in a tidy kitchen. Shortly after breakfast the farmer reappeared to beg Mrs. Gibson, who had had nursing experience, to go again to his wife, and my hostess put on her divided riding-skirt, and was wrapped up in a long yellow "slicker," tying a woollen cap on to her head. Then she mounted Nancy and cantered off to her work of mercy in the pouring rain, and it was five o'clock in the afternoon before she came back, very tired with all that she had gone through. Though there was



rain and to spare coming down from the heavens that morning, yet my host had to go off with his team to haul water, and I found that I had plenty to do with washing up the breakfast things and getting dinner ready. I made rissoles from some remains of beef, serving them with a sauce, which I looked upon as rather an achievement; mashed potatoes, a salad, a substantial pudding, and coffee completed the repast, which Mr. Gibson and I much appreciated when he came in from his work.

As Mrs. Gibson went off daily after breakfast to play the good Samaritan, my "home-help" experiences came in most usefully, and I felt proud at being able to assist my hostess, who otherwise would have been decidedly overworked.

It was surprising how much I found to do in the little house, but the preparing of meals and the washing up afterwards, the scalding of the many parts of the separator, the sweeping and cleaning of the rooms, the laundry-work, and so on, all took time. Of course I was not nearly as quick as my hostess, nor did I know where to lay my hand on everything, not having had, as yet, half enough of the "practice that makes perfect"; and I felt, by no means for the first time, how invaluable a course in some English training college would have been to me during my tour.

In Great Britain people do not always appreciate the incessant work incumbent on all women who run a household unaided on a prairie farm or a ranch, but I believe that an experience such as the following is extremely rare. A girl came from a comfortable English home to a brother who was ranching in Alberta, and on board her smart clothes aroused the attention of an acquaintance of mine. This lady knew the owners of a neighbouring ranch and made a few inquiries as to the brother and his residence. "Poor girl!" was the reply. "She little knows that young Roberts lives in a perfect hovel. He does nothing all day long but loaf round with a gun, and he is so terribly lazy that he doesn't even trouble to cook his porridge, but eats the oatmeal raw!"

"Has he horses?" asked my informant, "because Miss Roberts tells me that she has brought out a brand new habit."

"Yes, he has two horses, but so far he hasn't broken them in, and they run wild more or less."

I was not surprised to hear that Miss Roberts' visit to her brother was of the shortest duration, and I fear that for the rest of her days she will depict ranch life in Canada as a terrible God-forsaken exist-

ence, and will do her utmost to dissuade any girl from trying it.

On the other hand, I travelled home with another English girl, who had also been ranching with a brother, and in her own words was "just crazy" to return to the prairie.

"But a girl must be prepared for shocks if she goes out to Canada," she remarked; and on my inquiry as to what kind of "shock" she was alluding to, she said,

"Oh, think of it! A man will come in with a great mass of raw meat, and just dump it down in the kitchen, and very likely say that he has no time to cut it up at present, but will come in later. That sort of thing is terribly trying to the nerves just at first."

Personally I thought that I should not complain of ranch life if no worse "shocks" were to be apprehended than this.

Now and again we had our excitements. One evening a badger ran past, and Mr. Gibson raced after it, calling to his wife to bring up his rook-rifle, but the animal got off scot free. It is supposed to make away with the fowls, as do the coyotes, which the big deerhound would wildly chase if he sighted them on the prairie, and he was particularly quick in

pouncing upon unwary gophers, the little creatures taking too heavy a toll of the wheat for the farmer to regard them with a favourable eye.

On Sunday, the Day of Rest, we all got up late and sat talking over our breakfast, but none of us were in good spirits, as there had been a hard frost during the night (it was only August 27th), and the Gibsons feared for their crops. The day was superb, and merely to breathe in the air gave me a feeling of exultation that I was alive, but the fact remained that though so far the wheat and oats were spared, yet the potatoes must be dug up at once, losing perhaps a third of their marketable value, as they had not nearly reached maturity. And as the grain was by no means ripe, if these frosts continued there would be no harvest this year for my friends.

Perhaps it was a good thing that Mrs. Gibson had to go off to her patient, so that all of us were busy until a late dinner, after which we bumped across the prairie in the waggon to have tea with some nice neighbours.

Here the men discussed the burning question of "frosted" crops, but we shook off the feeling of depression that was hanging over us, and Mr. Gibson and his neighbour arranged to go off to the coal-mine with their teams in order to get that necessary of life for their respective households.

It was a great undertaking as the mine was thirty-



eight miles off, involving an absence of at least two days, and in wet weather the trail to it was practically impassable. Mrs. Gibson and I packed up a goodly supply of food for her husband. We made sandwiches of beef and potted shrimp paste; bread, butter, salt, tea, sugar, oranges, canned fruit, slices of meat, cake, matches, and cigarettes were all thought of, as well as water, knife, fork, spoon, plate and cup, soap and towels. At last everything was ready, and both of us felt a little depressed as the big greys passed out of the gate along the winding trail in the wake of the neighbour's team. It was a perfect evening, and that night the Northern Lights were wonderfully brilliant, forming a great arc and streaming across the sky like search-lights, throbbing and pulsating as they changed their form. I sat outside until it was time to go to bed, working busily at turning a bowl of cream into butter by means of an egg-whisk, rather a lengthy operation, and listening to the howl of the coyote, which is much akin to the heartrending yell of the jackal of the East.

Next day we were short of water, but relied on the good services of Mr. Blake and his team, our spirits being somewhat dashed when we learnt that the aforesaid horses had wandered off over the prairie and were nowhere to be found. Their master would have given his folks at home a decided shock if they



had seen him in working kit as I did at our first meeting. He was carrying a couple of pails, and his mud-encrusted boots, his trousers of the baggiest Canadian cut, his shirt in need of the wash-tub, and an old cowboy hat jammed on to a mass of fair hair that no barber had touched for many a month, concealed from my eyes the English gentleman that lay beneath, until he removed his hat and spoke. When we got friendly I took a snapshot of him in this costume to amuse his mother in the Old Country—or would it make her sigh? He was only twenty-two, and was a proof of the openings that Canada offers to the man with brains and ready hands. He had depended solely on his own exertions from the day he had landed, had done any work that offered itself, was now “making good money,” and would probably soon be taking up a big fencing contract with a gang of men under him.

But to return to the water question. The day was hot, and the mare, the cow, and the poultry came up to the house for drink, and Mrs. Gibson pumped a bucket from the well, thinking that perhaps the animals might stave off their craving with it. It was yellow with a scum upon it, and though the cow came up to it twice, sniffing loudly, yet she turned away in disgust, her example being followed by the mare and even the hens. Mr. Blake appeared at this

crisis, saying that he was about to draw water for us from a certain stream on a farm close by, and we tipped the well produce down a deep badger-hole that acted the part of a kitchen sink to the establishment, and carrying pails and jugs followed in his wake. There were two barbed-wire fences between us and our goal, and in my haste I did not flatten myself out sufficiently as I wriggled under them, my error resulting in disastrous consequences to my dress. We got water and to spare for all our stock, and filled every receptacle in the house as well, and on the day after, Mr. Gibson and his greys were sighted at some distance off, and soon were with us, both master and horses looking tired and travel-stained, but so glad to be at home again. My hostess and I had surpassed ourselves with our culinary efforts, and the midday meal was a great success.

I felt as if I were leaving a bit of England when I said good-bye to all my friends, the human beings and the animals, and it was with much regret that I heard later from Mrs. Gibson that their wheat had been "frosted," and that they were giving up the farm and seeking their fortune elsewhere. It seemed hard that this was the result of their first year of married life, but both husband and wife are optimists, and have made a fresh start in a locality where apparently the crops are never ruined by "Jack Frost."

## CHAPTER XI

### AT WORK IN A TOWN

It was a bright morning early in September when I was deposited on the platform of a prairie town very much "on the make," and as I made my way out of the station, carrying my "grip," building was going on in all directions, and there was an atmosphere of movement and progress around me. The life-giving air blew across hundreds of miles of land, either golden with grain or waiting for the plough of the settler, an air that tempts those who breathe it to dare the apparently impossible, and to accomplish such feats as throwing railway lines across mighty chains of mountains. As a man once said to me, "You can't get the 'blues' on the prairie," and though I do not altogether agree with him as regards the *women*, yet there is much truth in it for the men.

By this time I knew that I could always earn my bread in the Dominion, and the knowledge gave me a pleasing sense of independence, very different from my earlier feeling of helplessness, and as a first step in seeking work I asked my way to the Y.W.C.A.

Hostel. I was soon being interviewed by a most kindly Secretary, and said that I wanted a post in the town as home-help, but that I could not claim to be very experienced. This remark she paid no attention to whatever, as I heard her say through the telephone to a lady who needed a "girl," that "a most capable and competent Englishwoman had just come into the hostel!"

The lady wished to engage my services then and there, but I thought it better to have a personal interview, and offered to go and see her, finding my way with some difficulty to her home in a new residential quarter, where nice-looking wooden houses were being run up in all directions on the prairie.

Mrs. Madden, as I will dub her, was a pretty little woman, and had been only three days in her new home. She was an embodiment of nervous activity, as are so many in this country, but, according to her own account, a bad cook, and she hoped that I would take that part of the work off her shoulders.

I began on the subject of wages, and asked for twenty dollars (£4) a month. To this she demurred, saying, that as all the heavy washing went to a laundry, she could only give fifteen (£3). As I was always handicapped in my hunt for work by my inability to stay any length of time in a post, and was naturally



anxious to be fair to my employers, I seized on this as a good excuse for leaving at the end of a fortnight. Accordingly I said that I considered I was worth twenty dollars a month, but would stay with her at fifteen for a couple of weeks as a "temporary," if she cared to take me on those terms.

So great was the demand for domestic labour, and so scanty was the supply in that district, that she closed with me at once, refused to let me return to the Y.W.C.A. for my belongings, but "'phoned" to the station for an express agent to bring them, and set me to work in removing paint from the glass-doors of various cabinets.

The house was well planned and airy, with a good living-room, dining-room, and kitchen on the ground-floor, three bedrooms above, and underneath the building a large cellar lit by a window. Here was the furnace to heat the house in winter, and here wood, coal, and stores were kept. No water had as yet been laid on, and men came round in a tank-cart at intervals to fill a big cistern by the back-door, while there was a receptacle for rain-water in the cellar. This, at present, was nearly empty, and we had to use all the water with the utmost care, as, owing to the dry summer, the town was short of this necessity of life. My mistress told me that what there was was so bad



that typhoid was a frequent visitor here, and the newspapers warned the residents to boil the water even for washing purposes.

I saw from the first moment that I was not to be "one of the family" in any way, and very soon Mrs. Madden asked me my Christian name, wishing to call me by it, "as they do the servants in England!" For a moment I was taken aback, as hitherto I had always been addressed as Miss Sykes; and feeling that I really could not submit to being ordered about by my real name, I answered, "Please call me Ellen," and from morning till night that name resounded from bedroom to basement.

As there was no servant's room in the house, I was put into the prettily furnished guest-chamber, she and I dragging a big carpet upstairs, which we laid on the floor with much effort; and then curtains and a bedspread were brought, and I was housed in luxury.

After this it was time to get supper ready—scones, tinned shrimps, done up with a white sauce and served on biscuits, a fruit-salad, and tea. I laid the dining-room table for two, and wondered whether I was to partake of my meals in the kitchen, as I had heard that home-helps in the towns were usually required to do so. Of course I said nothing, but awaited developments, and Mrs. Madden, who was a curious

mixture of kindness coupled with a desire to get the last cent's worth of work out of anyone whom she employed, came into the kitchen and said, "I don't like to think of you eating your meals in here, so you may have them in the dining-room when we have finished." I thanked her, and she ordered breakfast to be ready at "half-past seven o'clock sharp" on the morrow, and went off to feed with her husband.

Thus began a decidedly lonely fortnight, though my mistress worked along with me in the mornings, and soon gave me various interesting confidences about herself and her relatives; but the master of the establishment never addressed a word to me, save that occasionally he would come into the kitchen early to intimate that he wished breakfast to be served without delay. Mrs. Madden's great friend, who came daily to the house with her nice little boy, and spent hours there, used to enter by the kitchen door, sweeping past me with a cold unseeing gaze, and was the only really rude Canadian that I encountered on all my travels. I used to think sometimes that a nice British girl would have been wretched, as, barring my own mistress, I spoke to hardly anyone, save perhaps to exchange a "good-day" with the tradesmen's boys. It reminded me of a picture in *Punch* years ago, in which a West End young lady is in-

structing some factory girls how to behave in society. She is telling them that no lady ever speaks to a man unless he is introduced to her, and one of them remarks, "Yes, miss, we know it, and we've always felt so sorry for you!"

The town itself was not interesting, save as a manifestation of Canadian energy, but here and elsewhere I was struck by the practical drinking-fountains. Unlike those in England, none of them had the unhygienic arrangement of a drinking-cup, but by pressing a metal ring the water bubbled up out of a pedestal, ending in a kind of vase, and could be drunk without fear of infection.

Occasionally I would take snapshots of any specially fine team working on the prairie round the town, and the owners were always anxious to "pose" for me, and sometimes begged for copies of their portraits. One man asked for four prints of his horses; but when I laughingly replied that I could only afford to give him one, he said earnestly, "Oh, you shan't be the loser. I'll pay up honest whatever you ask." Having, however, no mind to enter into commercial dealings with this chance acquaintance, I compromised with a gift of two photos, which I duly despatched to an address that he gave me.

On my first morning I was in the kitchen at half-

past six, and soon had porridge, toast, and coffee under way. The meal was laid as elaborately as in any English household with an embroidered table-centre, on which were flowers or a plant, and a good many small silver salt- and pepper-pots, and, what I greatly disliked, a little silver bell. This is what happened one day as I waited in the kitchen, not daring to go upstairs to make the beds and tidy the rooms. Tinkle ! tinkle ! tinkle ! I passed into the pantry and pushed open the swing-door into the dining-room. " Ellen, have you made any more toast ? " my mistress asked, and I answered in the affirmative, returning with what I had prepared for my own meal, and then retired.

Tinkle ! tinkle ! tinkle ! again resounded. This was to show me the remains of what looked like grubs in the porridge ! I had told Mrs. Madden that the oatmeal was musty, but she had paid no heed to my words until brought up short, as it were, with disagreeable facts. Tinkle ! tinkle ! tinkle ! Again I entered the dining-room, to be ordered to bring some hot water for the coffee. We usually had this when Mr. Madden was at home, a pleasant change from the eternal tea, and he told his wife to learn from me how to make it, as my brew was the best he had ever drunk in a private house. My simple recipe was to



put plenty of coffee into the pot, many Canadians only using the same quantity that they would if making tea, and I always added a pinch of salt to bring out the flavour.

Tinkle ! tinkle ! tinkle ! This was the fourth time, and I felt slightly ruffled. "Ellen, Mr. Madden has a fancy for a couple of eggs. Mind you boil them very lightly."

In a few moments the eggs were cooked and brought into the dining-room, and I again retired, only to hear an enraged and prolonged roulade of tinkling. What *could* it be this time ? I hastened in, to hear in irate tones from my mistress, "Ellen, you have boiled those eggs too hard. You must do some more. Get the sand-glass and take them out of the saucepan the *very second* that the last grain of sand has run through." This I did, and a lull ensued, during which I made myself some toast for my own breakfast.

At first I was supposed to pour fresh water on to the tea-leaves that had been drained by the Maddens, who usually sat some time over their meals ; but I soon rebelled, saying that I did not wish to start "Canadian indigestion." Mrs. Madden tried to compromise by showing me a packet of cooking soda, and telling me to partake of it if I felt any pangs. On this point, however, I stood firm, saying that my aim



was prevention, not cure, and was allowed to make a fresh brew of tea for myself at each meal !

The house needed many finishing touches, and the day after my arrival I was set to work at waxing the floor of the hall and large living-room. The hard wood was covered with dirty marks left by the workmen, and I was provided with a tin of polishing-wax and various rags, and was instructed to rub out the stains, working hard at them with the tips of my fingers. To encourage me, Mrs. Madden said that she had made extremely slow progress with the work on the previous day, and had hurt her nails badly. This I quite believed after a few moments, and asked for a scrubbing-brush. Though my mistress was sure that it would be of no use, I said that I should like to try it, and to her surprise it answered admirably. I made capital progress, went up several pegs in her esteem, and was proud to have given a tip to the omniscient Canadian woman !

In our agreement I was to have some time to myself every afternoon, but as my mistress had a large tea-party on my second day, I was let off for an hour before the one o'clock repast, and called at the Y.W.C.A. to thank the Secretary for helping me to find work, and from her surprised pleasure I inferred that not many girls had the grace to follow my example. She was

anxious for me to become an amateur nurse to an invalid, as that post was to be had with high pay, and was good enough to say that my appearance was in my favour. I said that I should greatly dislike nursing, but should be glad to hear of a temporary job on the prairie in a fortnight's time. She gladly agreed to help me, but thought that I was very misguided to refuse the nursing post, saying that it would have been a social rise for me as well as giving me increased wages.

One of the drawbacks of my new situation was the constant hunting for wood to feed the stove, as no coal was used at first. When the house was built, all the odds and ends of "lumber" were thrown in a great heap into the basement, and from here I had to pick out short lengths. I would also go searching round the house on the same errand, and often had to make an expedition during the preparation of a meal, so quickly were these thin bits of wood burnt up. Later on, some sacks of coal arrived, and things were easier, though I had to break up the huge blocks with an axe before I could use them. After her tea-party, at which I had waited, and carried in relays of thin bread and butter, my mistress instructed me to prepare a curious sort of "resurrection pie" for supper. Layers of biscuit-crumbs, tomato, tinned

Indian corn, cold sliced potatoes, and pieces of hard-boiled egg, were put into a fire-proof dish that was placed in the oven, and warmed through; and Mr. Madden arrived hungry from his office to sit down to this unsubstantial repast, the meals in this establishment being often of a Barmecide character.

Next day I had the fatiguing task of washing out the rooms upstairs, no light work for me, and which started a backache that lasted the whole time that I stayed with Mrs. Madden, and after the midday wash-up I asked for a couple of hours to myself as I felt extremely tired, the effects of a morning on my knees in company with the wash-pail. When this was granted, I inquired whether my mistress were not going to have a rest herself, as she had been on the "go" the whole time, hammering up curtains, working at her sewing-machine, and so on. "Oh dear no, she never did such a thing," and there was more than a tinge of contempt in her voice. She never could sit still if she felt that there was anything to be done, and was, in that respect, like her mother. As she went on to say that this lady was a martyr to a terrible form of indigestion that prevented her from eating if she were ever agitated, and that sent her to bed and into the hands of the doctor for weeks at a time, I "forgot my place," as the servants say, and

told my mistress to take warning, or she might be in the same plight before long.

Later on, when I was plucking and preparing a couple of wild ducks, I was amused to observe the deep interest that Mrs. Madden took in my operations. She said that the friend who had shot these had sent her a brace the year before, but that as neither she nor her "girl" knew how to deal with them she had buried them! "But," she said with pride, "I know that they have to be cleaned. I am not like a friend of mine who cooked them with everything inside!" Yet, though her culinary skill was small, she was a notable housewife in other respects, and would detect in a moment any deficiency in my work. On one occasion, when I was cleaning all the rooms on the ground floor, and had worked, as I imagined, most conscientiously, her eagle eye discovered that I had omitted to dust the rungs of the dining-room chairs.

As a rule, I had finished my work about half-past three or four, but even when I got upstairs I had to make my bed and tidy my room, then change my dress, so sometimes it happened that I could not get out till five o'clock, and had to walk my hardest if I went to the Post Office for letters, as I had to be back by six. Often I would make for a retired part of the prairie, and rest in the sunshine, until it was time to



return to the "House of Bondage," as I whimsically called it. Before I went to bed I always cleared out the stove, threw away the ashes, and laid the fire ready for the morning; then I had to wipe the stove all over with a special cloth, wash the kitchen table, sweep the dove-grey painted floor, and lastly put the empty milk bottles between the back door and the wire-screen, with a ticket to denote the amount needed on the morrow. Usually I stepped out upon the prairie to drink in a few full breaths, and to have a look at the harvest moon riding like a shield of burnished gold on a purple velvet sky, before I crept upstairs to bed.

Saturday is, of course, always a day of cleaning up everywhere, but as the kitchen of this house had not been touched since the workmen vacated it, I had my work cut out in scrubbing the floor of this room, together with the pantry, and the steps and passage leading to the back door. Scrub away as I might, it seemed impossible to get the light grey flooring clean, until I used a patent soap that cleansed like magic, though probably it was not the best thing in the world for the paint. My back ached badly when this task was through, but Mrs. Madden did not allow me to rest for a moment, sending me to wipe down the staircase. "Be careful to do the corners



of the steps, and pass the cloth between each rung of the banisters, Ellen," was her injunction, but she called me off in the middle of the work, as it was high time to light the stove again, to peel and cook potatoes, get the steak ready, and put the Sunday roast into the oven.

Though my mistress was nice to me in her way, and likeable, yet she was a born "hustler," and wanted everything to be done at top-speed, never allowing sufficient time for the preparation of the midday meal, for example, which always had to be got ready "full steam ahead." When I was working away at one task, she would rush in to urge me to hasten in order to begin on something else—in fact, she entirely lacked the element of repose. She did her best to hurry me over my meals, but I remonstrated, saying that I positively *must* be allowed fifteen or twenty minutes in which to eat them quietly, and she had to give in.

When I went, later, to see the Secretary of the Y.W.C.A. about another post, she asked me to tell her in confidence my opinion of Mrs. Madden as an employer; and I said, that though kind, she was such a taskmistress that she would have no mercy on anyone slow or delicate, and I felt that her situation was only suited to a robust girl, blessed with a phlegmatic temperament.

At last Sunday arrived, but it was by no means a Day of Rest to the home-help. As there were to be an afternoon tea-party and a late dinner-party, I asked whether I could go to morning church ; but as my employers did not get down to breakfast till ten o'clock (of course I had my breakfast in the kitchen on this occasion before they appeared), it was impossible for me to reach the church until the service was more than half done. A young man, who acted as verger, beckoned me to a chair beside his, just inside the door, took my parasol from me, and found me the place in a hymn-book ; and on the following Sunday, when I made my appearance even later, he greeted me with a reproachful smile, when I again sank into the same seat. The congregation was composed mostly of men, and these seemed to be nearly all of the shop-keeping and labouring classes. There was not an old man to be seen among them, and they looked thin, eager-eyed, and restless, as if they never slept their fill ; and this I can well believe, as they labour from the first glint of dawn to the last ray of daylight during the summer months. The winter comes as a merciful period of hibernation, when, as a farmer said to me, " We all lie abed."

Directly I got back from church I was set to dust the stairs, to polish the mirrors, clean the silver, and so on ; and it was after three o'clock that I was able

to partake of a meal of potatoes and beans, washed down with a cup of tea. All our efforts were concentrated on the tea- and supper-parties, and I cut relays of lettuce sandwiches for the former, and made a trifle, among other things, for the latter. The guests came about eight o'clock, and certainly Mrs. Madden's dinner-table, which she laid herself, looked charming, with its embroidered cloths, a big bowl of flowers, pretty china, silver, and cut-glass. I waited on the guests, changed the plates, and ate "snacks" of food myself in the kitchen in the intervals of washing up. It was a long and wearisome job to wash and dry and put away everything; and when that was done at last I must lay the fire for the morrow, wipe the stove, and sweep out the kitchen. It was past eleven o'clock when I went to bed, thoroughly tired out, and wishing that something might occur to prevent Mr. Madden requiring his breakfast at half-past seven next day.

Whilst in Canada I acquired the useful accomplishment of being able to call myself at any hour, and consequently was never late with the breakfast. But my slumbers were by no means as profound as they usually are—indeed, I often woke up two or three times during the night, so anxious was I not to oversleep myself—and owing to this I seldom felt really rested, and when I was at any hotel between my posts

I would "sleep the clock round" to make up. An alarum clock would have been a help, but, as it was, the prairie air took away all fatigue when I was up and doing, and I will now jot down from my diary what I did on a "full" day.

I had breakfast ready by half-past seven, and when the things were washed up and put away, Mrs. Madden, who loved all household "chores" save cooking, began to wash up a month's personal clothing. Though I was not allowed to take my share of this, yet I was kept fully employed in running up and down the steep basement stairs with pails of water, cracking up big blocks of coal to fill the coal-box, and making up a hot fire from its contents. In the intervals I had to wipe over all the woodwork of the dining-room, wax and polish the staircase, also make a "layer" cake. By this time the clothes were ready to hang out on the line, and before I had finished fastening them up with pegs, I must peel the potatoes, put the meat and pudding into the oven, and lay the lunch-table. There was a special cloth for each meal, and after the repast everything was cleared away, and a plant or a bowl of flowers placed on the polished table. On this particular day, when the lunch (I got none till half-past one), was disposed of, and the washing-pan and table scoured, I had to wash the kitchen floor, as a great deal of coal-dust had got sprinkled about (how often



did I wish that the aforesaid floor had not been of so delicate a grey that it showed every mark !), and bring in all the clothes, dry by this time, as a high wind was blowing. It was nearly five o'clock before I had done my room, changed my working dress, and was ready to enjoy my one hour "off" during that day. Throughout Canada the home-help is always free after she has cleared away supper and tidied up the kitchen, and I felt decidedly "put upon" later on when my mistress, before going forth to spend the evening with friends, told me to ice the cake that I had made, and also to sprinkle the big basketful of clothes, and roll them up tightly in readiness for the morrow's ironing. I made no remark, though I was both tired and cross ; but after I had operated upon seventy-five articles, not counting handkerchiefs and such little things, my anger rose, and when I got upstairs after a day's work that had lasted from half-past six in the morning to half-past ten at night, and during which I had really only had an hour to myself, I determined to have "words with the missus" on the morrow !

Accordingly, after breakfast next day, I laid the matter before her. She said that a general servant must expect to have lots to do.

I answered that I was a home-help, and as such was in a different category.



She instantly changed her ground at this, and demanded if she had ever treated me as she would treat a general servant? She had met me half-way, she considered, and had she ever asked me to work in the evening until now?

I answered to the last question, "No; but what has occurred once may happen again."

Upon this our discussion ended, but I found that I had improved my position by standing up for my "rights." Mrs. Madden volunteered to help me with the midday wash-up, asked me to have a cup of afternoon tea, and offered to give me a ticket for a Conservative meeting that evening (she and I were both keenly interested in the Reciprocity question), and during the rest of my stay behaved far more considerately to me. Mentioning Reciprocity reminds me of an Englishman who came to the house with groceries while I was there. Mrs. Madden, who was in the kitchen, remarked on the Conservative badge he wore in his button-hole. "I should just think I *am* for the Conservatives," he said. "It is Free Trade that has turned me and ever so many of my mates out of Britain, and I say," and his tone was furious, "that every Englishman who votes for Reciprocity ought to be hanged!"

Mr. Madden had been from home for a couple of

days, and I had done up a dish of fried potatoes and eggs for Mrs. Madden and myself for supper. The fire was just going out, and I was waiting for my mistress to vacate the dining-room in my favour, when the telephone bell rang loudly. Mrs. Madden went to hear the message, and returned with a glad face to say that her husband was coming back unexpectedly, and would be at the house in half an hour's time. I have sometimes read in a novel (not one written by a domestic, if any such exists), that "master's" home-coming is a source of unmixed pleasure to his servants, who joyously rush to and fro at their mistress's bidding to have everything in order against his return. Ellen, I fear, was no faithful handmaid of this type. She had been working hard all day, had had nothing since her dinner, and now would probably be deprived of her supper for an indefinite period. The stove had to be made up—a process that involved descents into the cellar for coal and wood—bacon had to be sliced and fried, eggs poached, toast made, water boiled for a fresh brew of tea, and so on. She felt rather gloomy, but things took on a brighter hue when her mistress said that she had better have her meal at once in the kitchen, after which she was ready to receive "master" and his orders for an extra early breakfast with equanimity!

There were several houses in course of construction

in this suburb of the rapidly-growing prairie town, and Mrs. Madden viewed with a covetous eye the solid little blocks of wood that were left scattered round them when the workmen went home. Twice she asked me in the politest way whether I would accompany her at night to one or other of these residences, and we carried a big sack, which we filled with chunks of wood, just the right size to feed the stove, and which saved me from many a hunt in the cellar. My conscience, however, was by no means easy on these expeditions, though there was a sense of adventure as we stumbled along in the starlight, picking our way as best we could among the holes and uneven places on the short grass. Mrs. Madden had remarked that all these bits of wood that the builders rejected were really the property of the owner of the house, and would finally be deposited in his basement, as they had been in ours; and her excuse for taking them was that she was quite sure that others had annexed *her* blocks of wood, but I did not consider this at all a convincing reason. She nearly came to grief one evening, as she boldly went inside one of these half-built residences, and in the darkness could not see that the room was only partially floored, and she just saved herself by her extraordinary quickness, from falling through a hole into the basement below, a fall that probably would have resulted in a broken leg.

Though I was only a fortnight in Mrs. Madden's employ, yet the time seemed very long, and it was with a feeling of joyful relief that I woke up on the morning of my last day in her service. I had had while with her a sensation of being utterly friendless, such as I had not had anywhere else in Canada, and when a lady in the town asked me through the telephone whether I would take a situation with her, I felt that one post in Newton had been quite enough. It had left me with a tiresome backache, and on the last day I had acquired many bruises by falling head-long down the staircase, on which I had expended much wax and "elbow grease" in polishing, and which in consequence had become a most dangerous highway.

My parting with Mrs. Madden was friendly, for I saw that from her point of view she had treated me well. She knew that I was going the next day to a farm on the prairie, and offered to put me up if I came back through the town ; or, if I did not require a bed, she said that she would be delighted to give me a meal. With a kindly wish for my future success we parted, and I turned my back on her pretty house with very much the same feeling as if I had just escaped out of a prison, eating my supper that evening with the delightful consciousness that it would not be interrupted by any tinkling silver bell !



## CHAPTER XII

### OPENINGS IN CANADA FOR EDUCATED WOMEN

THERE is work and to spare for the right type of woman—one who is robust, adaptable, and thoroughly trained in some calling that is needed in a new country. Very few on the wrong side of forty ought to try their fortune across the Atlantic, because they are, as it were, in the British groove, and will find it almost impossible to fit into an entirely new environment. Let me quote the words of a Canadian lady who has done a great work for the English girl in the Dominion. "Canada," she writes, "is essentially a country for the young and strong, both mentally and physically, as the crudeness of many things out here are only sources of amusement and provocative of renewed energy to overcome them to the buoyancy of the young; but to the woman turned forty, they are burdens."

I hear often that British girls are not strong enough for the life in Canada, but I do not hold at all with this opinion. Young women who are experts at tennis, hockey, or golf will do well there, if they will only fit



themselves beforehand for the different existence that they will have to lead.

If a girl has a comfortable post in Great Britain and an assured future, perhaps she had better stay in the Old Country ; and she who has spent her whole time in playing games will be sadly disillusioned if she thinks that her amateurish efforts will pass muster in a land that has no use for the inefficient. There are hundreds of girls at the present day who are living in country parsonages, or whose fathers are retired officers, professional or business men. What prospect is there for many of these when the head of the family passes away ? Far too often a poverty-stricken future awaits them. Some, for lack of anything better, may fill the already overstocked profession of governess, which reminds me that a few days before I sent this book to press, a friend told me that in answer to her advertisement for a nursery-governess she had between seventy to eighty replies !

Some of the girls that sent her those letters may possibly end their days as pensioners of some charitable society, or even—and the cases are more numerous than is usually believed—in the workhouse.

Surely it would be better to stave off such a fate while a girl is young, and can be trained for some profession that will ensure her a comfortable livelihood

and the opportunity of laying by for old age? If she has that dash of pluck and the pioneer spirit in which our race has never been lacking, she will make light of the hardships and discomforts inseparable from life in a new country.

Her reward will be a wider outlook and more opportunities of "making good," than she would probably have found in England, and after a time she will share the legitimate pride of all Canadians in this splendid part of the Empire. As a British woman of this type said to me in Victoria, "I could never go home again for good because everything seems so poverty-stricken in England in comparison with Canada. Out here we can all make our way, and there isn't such a thing as a beggar in the country."

But whatever she undertakes, a girl must not think of coming out to the Dominion without a knowledge of cooking, washing, and so on, this being absolutely necessary in a country where only five per cent. of the women have servants. She must also be smart in appearance, as that will tell greatly in her favour when seeking work. An English lady, living in a big Canadian town, told me that she always knew her own country-women by their ill-hung skirts, their badly-cut blouses, with a gap between skirt and waistband, and their general slovenly appearance,

in strong contrast to the Canadian working woman in her well-starched "waist," or neat cotton dress. British girls make a great mistake when they think that "anything will do" for an office.

### HOME-HELPS

The one calling in which a girl can get immediate employment is that of home-help, but I fear that this occupation has not always been presented in its true light. The mere words "Golden West" teem with allurements, and there is a charm in the idea of helping with the pioneer work of a new country. Before I went to Canada I gathered from the literature treating of this subject, that I should probably have riding or driving in the afternoons and that there would be some social intercourse among the neighbours, many of whom would be of my own class. Nothing, or hardly anything, of this fell to my lot in the five situations that I filled during the summer, and maid-of-all-work as I was, I should have been too tired to have enjoyed such distractions had I had the chance of them. Canada is certainly the paradise of the labouring classes, but the girl who goes by the name of "lady" in the British Isles will find that her culture is little if at all appreciated by her employers. I also found that in the towns the home-help was treated

✓ x merely as a servant, and was not in any way made one of the family, even in the case of an English clergyman's daughter, who was acting as nurse to some children.

One of my mistresses told me that her former companion, a nice-looking girl, usually played the part of a wall-flower at the winter dances, and I was astonished when she accounted for this by saying that the men looked down upon her because she was a home-help; and later on, a lady confided to me that she had filled this position before her marriage, and begged me not to mention the fact.

Personally, I was treated almost as a guest when on the farms, but in two of my situations I was made to feel that I filled an inferior position, none of the visitors of either sex who came to the house taking any notice of me, and, as a rule, I had to work from morning till night without any time to cultivate my mind, and often without the privacy which is usually so priceless a possession to the educated woman. Of course, owing to my lack of training, I did not get through my work quickly, and it must also be remembered that the life is greatly simplified. Yet I think that my experience would be corroborated by the majority of home-helps throughout the Dominion, but, as exceptions prove the rule, I believe



that on Vancouver Island, and in a few other places, \*  
 a woman may become a home-help without degene-  
 rating into a drudge, and will have the opportunity  
 of mixing on equal terms with her own class. In  
 support of this I will quote the words of a lady who  
 worked in that capacity on the Island for over a year.  
 She says: "If real ladies come here, and are young  
 and capable, willing to learn and ready to begin at  
 ten to twelve dollars a month (£2 to £2, 8s.), they will  
 have a really good time, as there is a large Anglo-  
 Indian society here, and the girls are invited to all  
 the dances, picnics, and lawn-tennis. The idea is  
 for everyone to live a happy, healthy, outdoor life,  
 and, as Chinese servants demand exorbitant wages, x  
 the residents are delighted to get lady-helps to assist  
 them, but they do not want ill-educated and un-  
 trained girls to enter their home-circles."

The following concerns two applicants of the  
 Colonial Intelligence League, who went to Western  
 Canada as home-helps:

*"June 1912.*

"We have been very fortunate in getting posts  
 at once. . . .

"We are going to do the cooking and the dining-  
 room. There are only three meals a day, and as there  
 is no meat or fish, the establishment being conducted on



strict vegetarian principles, there will be no really dirty work.

"The house is heated with central heating, and there is electric light everywhere. The cook's salary is \$35 a month (£7), and the one who undertakes the dining-room work will get \$20 a month (£4).

"We think ourselves extremely fortunate in getting posts so quickly, and also to be with gentlefolk. We must and will do our best to keep them. . . .

"It is a great pity that more of the upper classes do not come out. There are certainly openings for all."

With the last words of the letter I am in complete agreement, but unless a girl is really fond of domestic work I should advise her to take the post of home-help merely as a stepping-stone to something better, which is certain to turn up if she be competent.

Let us now discuss some of the other openings in Canada that might commend themselves to a capable and energetic woman.

In every case, save that of home-help, the demand for which is never ending, a woman ought to have sufficient money to keep herself until she finds suitable work.

*Teaching in the Government Elementary Schools* offers a fair prospect to a girl, who is already qualified

in England, or who would be ready to go through a training in Canada, and details can be obtained from the office of the Board of Education at Whitehall.

The demand for teachers throughout the whole Dominion far exceeds the supply, and the Deputy Minister of Education for Alberta informed me that he could give posts to some two hundred girls annually in that one province, and had entered into an agreement with our Board of Education, by which certain British certificates held by girls would enable the possessors to start teaching at once in the Dominion, gaining their Canadian certificate later. But they would be wise to go through a six weeks' course; planned by the Minister, this entailing no expense save their board and lodging and a few books.

The minimum salary is £125 per annum, but I have lately read a budget of letters from English girls, all in their first posts, and in each case the salary was £132, and they were paying £3, 4s. a month for their keep. Several of the letters said that the prospects for teachers were far better in Canada than at home, and certainly the social position is a good one in the country, all the farms competing for the honour of boarding the teachers.

The following is taken from the letter of one of the girls helped by the Colonial Intelligence League :

*" Winter of 1911.*

"The authorities were exceedingly kind, and had I not been in communication with you" (the representative of the League in British Columbia), "would have interested themselves in me, and found me a post. . . .

"Everybody on the island is exceedingly pleasant, and does everything possible to make my life happy. There are eight children in the school, between the ages of six and fourteen years, which makes the teaching a little complicated, but one soon gets used to it. I am very fortunate to have got a post like this. . . . I am boarding in a most comfortable house, and am well looked after . . . ."

Of course there are drawbacks. An English girl, accustomed to plenty of friends at home, may find ✱ living on a lonely farm rather trying, for in many cases there is no social life whatever. Her pupils may be under a dozen, and of all ages, but, as a rule, she will find that they are very intelligent, and eager to learn, never staying away from school if they can help it. They may also consist of half a dozen nationalities, and she will have the splendid work of turning them into loyal citizens of the Empire.

Behind the neat schoolhouse, over which the Union

Jack flies, there will most likely be a stable, for probably some of the children have to ride or drive long distances, the Government, I was told, providing a horse for the teacher if she has to board far from her work. One Canadian ex-teacher told me that she had had to drive five miles to her school in all weathers, only passing two houses on her way; "but," she added with a laugh, "I had the best social position in the district, and the pick of all the husbands!"

If the British girl "wins her spurs" in the country, she will, in time, be eligible for a town school, with higher pay, or she may find a position in one of the Secondary Schools. In passing, it is well to note that as all classes send their children to be educated at the Government Schools, there is practically no demand for governesses in the Dominion.

*Nursing* is another good opening for a girl who has the qualifications for this profession. But by this I do not mean that nurses who have received their training in England should come out. Unless these latter possess a three years' General Hospital certificate, they will not be admitted into the Canadian Nursing Association; and as the methods in use in the Dominion are in various instances different from those in vogue in Britain, it is not to be wondered at that Canadian doctors prefer to employ Canadian-trained



nurses. This, at least, was the case in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Calgary during my tour. But there is a great demand for *probationers*, between the ages of twenty-two and thirty-four. The work is hard during the three years' course, but the girls are well looked after, carefully nursed if ill, and their future is assured when the training is over—£4 to £6 a week being given for private cases.

I cannot do better than quote from a letter sent to me by an English girl who has gone through one of the big hospitals in the West, and has lately married a Canadian doctor.

"The nurses serve two months as probationers, and then have an entrance exam. If this is satisfactorily passed, and the Lady Superintendent considers the girl likely to make a good nurse, she is received into the training school, signing a paper to the effect that she will stay three years, unless prevented by illness. . . . Board, lodging, and laundry are all provided. We had a very nice Home, with a large reception-room and library, and each class was allowed to entertain one night a week from eight o'clock to ten o'clock; on special occasions we were given late leave till twelve o'clock. As for other distractions, the day nurses were off duty at 7.30 P.M., and could go where



they liked, provided they were in by 10 P.M., when the Home was locked up. But the training is a hard one, and social distractions after twelve hours' hard work do not appeal to you as much as your bed!

"The training is an excellent one in every branch. The hospital is very loyal to its graduates, and the Lady Superintendent finds them posts when they first leave the school. . . . I consider that nurses are better treated in Canada than in England, and it is the Land of Opportunity for young people who are willing to work, but it will only spell disaster to those who go expecting to get something for nothing."

These last words ought to be taken to heart by every girl who thinks of trying her fortune in the Dominion.

*Stenographers* (i.e. shorthand writers and typists). These are in demand throughout Western Canada, the salaries ranging from £8 to £20 a month; but as Canadian girls go in much for this profession, with the result that it is overstocked with indifferent typists, the British woman must be thoroughly competent in order to succeed. More than one man, however, told me that he would take an English in preference to a Canadian stenographer, as the former was, as a rule, better educated all round, and could write a letter

from notes and take an intelligent interest in the details of the business.

This letter from an applicant of the Colonial Intelligence League, who has tried her fate in Western Canada, is full of encouragement to the efficient :

"June 1912.

"I was only a week here when I started work as stenographer at \$55 a month (£11), with the promise of \$60 to \$65 later on (£12 to £13). . . .

"Of course there is a great deal that I have to learn, as Canadian business methods are very different to those at home ; but in about a month, I think, I shall have grasped these, and then I have been told by various business men here that I shall have no difficulty in getting \$75 a month (£15).

"There is a large demand for experienced stenographers here. Any girl of average ability would have no difficulty in getting a situation here within a week of her arrival."

✕ *Journalism* did not strike me as a very promising opening save for a few who have special gifts for that calling. I met one English girl who had supported herself entirely for six years as a journalist, but she told me that every now and again she had been out of work, and had had a hard time. Another gave me

the details of a day's work, which partly consisted in constantly telephoning to hospitals and fire-stations in order to report all accidents and fires, and also running a "Personal and Social" column, reviewing books, music, and the drama. The hours were long, the strain continuous, and the average salary of the rank and file was only about £10 a month, which seems little enough when the printer, who sets up the type, is often paid at the rate of £1 a day!

Dress also is a considerable item, as the journalist is expected to mingle with the guests at social functions, in order to describe the toilettes there displayed; but one acquaintance told me that this part of her work was so distasteful to her that she was accustomed to mount into a gallery and make her observations with the aid of opera-glasses.

*Dressmaking and millinery* are most profitable professions for the expert, and from Toronto to Vancouver I heard complaints as to the dearth of skilled *couturières*.

A lady, lately come from British Columbia, told me that she had paid between £13 and £14 for a perfectly plain though well-cut coat and skirt in which to travel to England; she could not get a passable "knockabout" hat under £3; and she assured me that £20 was a usual price to pay for an evening

dress by no means out of the ordinary run. I noticed that, in the Western towns, really smart hats were priced £5 to £10, and I reluctantly paid over £3 for a headgear that I could have got for 12s. 9d. in any of the Kensington High Street shops, and when I looked at straw shapes with an eye to trimming a hat myself, I found that £1 was a usual price. These figures only apply to Canada west of Winnipeg, and relate to the year 1911.

All the shops give high salaries to dressmakers and milliners, as they fear that they may start business for themselves, thus entering the market as rivals. But I should advise no woman to risk her capital in this way for several months. If she does not care to work in a shop, she can get 8s. to 10s. a day and her meals by going out to make blouses and cotton dresses, or she can advertise saying that she will take in work at home, and, if quick and clever, she will in all probability get far more orders than she can cope with.

*Waitresses* at good hotels expect to earn about £8 a month, including their tips, and are lodged and boarded; but as this is a favourite calling for the alert Canadian, the British girl must be particularly brisk and capable if she is to succeed.

I met an Englishwoman who was starting a restaurant in a Western city, and begged her to employ

educated British women as waitresses. But this she declined to do, on the ground that they were too slow, and that only a few days before she had been inquiring about some compatriots who had been working in a Canadian café, and the answer was, "Oh, we fired them all out; they were no good, as they couldn't hustle." Certainly a Canadian waitress, when I asked her how she remembered all the orders she had to take, gave me much the same idea. "Sure, it's 'hustle' that does it. At first I used to say all my orders over and over—6 roasts, 4 mashed, 5 corns, and so on—and one had to be pretty quick in picking up the dishes in the kitchen, I can tell you; it was more like a baseball match than anything else with all of us calling out at the same moment. But it is often the men who are tiresome, and Heaven help the man who can't order properly!"

"What do you do then?" I asked.

"Oh, we bring him something to eat, and then there's a row; but one must make up one's mind to that," and she shrugged her shoulders philosophically. On the other hand, I came across British girls who were getting on well in the C.P.R. summer hotels and the Hudson Bay Stores tea-rooms.

*Factories, shops, &c.* At Toronto the "white-wear" factories (*i.e.* blouses and underlinen), offer £1



a week to start with, rising to £2 or even £4, the surroundings are clean and airy, and the hours eight and a half daily. Shop assistants have shorter hours than in England, but I should only recommend educated women to take up these callings until they found more congenial work.

✓ *Manicure, hairdressing, and face-massage* are certainly profitable when practised in the towns, and several English girls whom I questioned told me how much better they were doing in Canada than they could possibly do at home, and those that had been a year or so in the country said that they could easily start a lucrative business for themselves had they sufficient capital.

“Were you obliged to wait some time before you got employment?” I asked women in different towns, and the answer was invariably the same.

“Oh no, I went to the shop with my references, and they took me on then and there. You see they are always afraid that a girl will set up for herself in opposition to them.” But in spite of this I should not recommend a woman to have these professions as the only string to her bow, nor should she depend on playing or singing at the C.P.R. hotels during the season, or at restaurants during the meal-times, though possibly she may find employment for these

talents, or even succeed with acting, photography, or painting, after she has learnt the ways of the country.

If two or three capable women with some capital could join and start a *boarding or a "rooming" house*, the venture, if well managed, would be a profitable one, the usual plan being to put down £80 to £100 at first, and pay off the rest by monthly instalments.

Hundreds of men are obliged to live in hotels in Western Canada, and many would much prefer a boarding-house, where they would pay according to accommodation. In a "rooming" house no meals are provided, but hot and cold water and electric light, with steam-heat in winter, are supplied to each room.

*Restaurants and tea-shops* are also lucrative; but women, I was told, should serve in a smart, up-to-date American café before starting on any venture of their own in the Dominion, in order to get *le dernier cri* in the decoration of their rooms, the arrangement of their wares, and the newest mechanical contrivances to assist them in their work. In all these cases it is imperative that the girls should be able to do the entire work of boarding-house or restaurant themselves, as hired help of any kind is uncertain, and, if efficient, is costly.

Only the other day an Englishwoman discussed with

me her idea of starting a boarding-house in Canada, with the aid of servants that she would bring out with her from England. "Could you manage the cooking and cleaning yourself, supposing your maids got married or left you from any cause?" I asked; and, as I expected, her astonished answer was in the negative.

There are many openings for the woman fond of an outdoor life, and if she has capital she could start *small fruit, vegetable, or flower-raising* (in 1911 strawberries in the West were 8½d. a lb., cauliflowers 1s., cabbages 5d., tiny bunches of carrots and turnips 5d., while a dozen roses fetched 4s., arum lilies 4s. a bloom and violets 1s. a bunch, all this at the height of the season; while tomatoes or mushrooms raised under glass realised high prices in Vancouver). I was told more than once that the *tending of small town gardens*, or landscape gardening, or bulb- and seed-raising, would be lucrative callings, while *bee-keeping* is not to be despised as a side-industry in a clover district.

*Poultry-farming* is another pursuit fitted for women, and at Vancouver eggs fetch 2d. when the fowls are laying their best, and 3d. to 4d. during the winter.

Girls, however, must be prepared to do all the work themselves, as the jobbing labourer and the handy-boy are practically non-existent in Canada.

Again and again it was pointed out to me that women ought to take up *dairy-work*, as there is plenty of pasture in British Columbia, and at the present time Canada imports much of her butter from New Zealand.

But I should strongly dissuade a woman from laying out capital in any of the above callings until she has been some time in the country. She might, as I have said before, take a course at the Agricultural College of Pullman, Washington State, America, if she intended to settle in British Columbia, or one at Guelph College, Ontario, should she elect to start in the East. Failing this, she could get employment in some market-garden or chicken ranch in order to gain the practical experience that will be invaluable to her later on. I should certainly not advise anyone to act in the way that one Englishwoman whom I met contemplated doing. She wished to buy a chicken ranch and start working it, having had only one month's training at an English agricultural college and no previous experience. She admitted that her equipment was scanty, but said that she was advertising for some one with the requisite knowledge to enter into partnership with her—by no means a safe proceeding in a new country such as the Dominion. I think, however, that my remark that if she put her trust in strangers



she would probably gain experience at the painful cost of losing her capital made her reflect somewhat.

To sum up, though I do not affirm for a moment that women will make their "fortunes" by going in for any of the above openings, yet they will gain their living, and will be able to look forward to old age without apprehension, especially if they invest in the Government Annuity Scheme, by which they can get £120 per annum after fifty-five.

It is also no exaggeration to say that the judicious investment of savings in a country that offers such a large return for capital as does the Dominion, may possibly result in real affluence.

This chapter may not unfittingly be concluded with the words of a distinguished Canadian journalist, words that gave me much food for thought: "In the Dominion," she remarked, "we consider that there is something wrong about a woman if she cannot earn her own livelihood."



## CHAPTER XIII

### ON THE PRAIRIE DURING THE HARVEST

It was the latter half of September when I got into the train that was to convey me to my fifth post as home-help in the province of Saskatchewan, shortened to Sask, the other provinces in which I had taken situations being known respectively as Man, Alta, and B.C. (Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia). On either side, as far as eye could see, the prairie was covered with stooks of golden corn glittering in the sunlight, and representing the food of many thousands. There it was, the sign manual, as it were, of the prosperity of this magnificent country, the wheat just waiting to be taken to the threshing machines. After that it would be hauled to the huge grey elevators, that in their turn would hand it over to the railway, which would pour its precious freight into the holds of many a vessel crossing from this New World to the Old. It was a bumper harvest, though in other parts of Canada the crops had been "frosted," and I was not surprised that various of my fellow-travellers ejaculated, "That's great!" as they gazed from the windows of the car.

I was about to enter upon my last situation, and had given as an excuse for its temporary nature, that I was now leaving Canada and returning to my own country. I had felt that my experiences would be incomplete unless I were on the prairie during the busy season of harvesting, and that over, I intended to fling aside my working dress and aprons for good. The position of home-help had not appealed to me. Though I had experienced much kindness from some of my employers, and though by this time I was by no means incompetent, yet I felt it would be an awful fate to pass my days in cooking and dish-washing, sweeping and scrubbing, having practically no time to cultivate my mind or to care for my appearance—in fact, to sink to the level of a household drudge.

The Canadian women often evoked my warmest admiration. My fourth mistress, for example, was a perfect miracle of activity. I have seen her do the weekly wash in the morning, have a guest to lunch, after which she might go for a ride or play golf, getting afternoon-tea for herself and any friends, and in the evening have a bridge-party, or sally forth, gaily attired, to some friend's house. She was always neat, and could on occasion look as if she had just come out of a fashion plate, and added singing and playing

to her list of accomplishments. But it must be noted that she was quite young ; and I remarked that the older women by no means rejoiced in household "chores," and I often heard them lament that they were unable to have many outside interests, so tired did they become with the day's toil.

If Englishwomen come out to the Dominion they most emphatically ought to come *young*. An elderly lady with whom I travelled one day told me that she and her husband and family had all gone out to Canada to live on a ranch, and that though the younger generation loved the life, yet the change from her British ways had nearly killed her. After little over a year she had had a serious nervous collapse, and when I met her she was leaving the ranch for probably six months. "I have heard people in England talk about the 'call of the prairie!'" she said, "but I never could see any charm in it, and I only felt that I was the 'prisoner of the prairie,' caught and helpless and never able to escape. I had always loved music and sketching, and though I could turn my hand to household work, yet it was intolerable to have to do it day after day, and to find no time or opportunity for the things I cared about. I could not play, as we had no piano, and as for trying to sketch the prairie—" and she shivered at the bare

idea. This talk confirmed me in my conviction that the middle-aged should not come out to Canada, as they can seldom adapt themselves to an environment so totally different to that to which they were accustomed in the British Isles.

But I must return to my own experiences. It was early in the afternoon when I alighted at a little town (a village we should call it in England), composed of one straggling street of wooden houses with a "store" or two, a grey-painted "lumber" hotel, and the usual display of gaudily painted agricultural implements.

I had had an interview with the daughter of my new employer, and she had said that I should be met here, as the farm lay some dozen miles from the station. But no one took any notice of me, though I placed my "grip" in such a manner that my name, painted on it, was in full view. The little crowd on the platform dwindled away, and still I waited, and near me stood a dark man clad in very dirty blue overalls. At last he addressed me, and inquired whether I was expecting Mr. Mackenzie to meet me. I said that I was, and not unnaturally jumped to the conclusion that my questioner was one of the farm hands.

"I have a little job on at the blacksmith's," he

continued, in a pleasant voice, "but if you don't mind waiting here for half an hour I will come and fetch you with the buggy."

Of course I agreed to this, and within the time he mentioned a ramshackle vehicle, with a pair of good horses made its appearance. I was helped in, a dubious-looking rug disposed across my knees, and my acquaintance took the reins, while a couple of rather seedy-looking men got in behind. These were to help with the harvesting, and we started off, crossing the prairie by a road that must be almost impassable in winter, as it was composed of the thick black loam that produces these wonderful "bumper" harvests. After a while I asked my driver how near we were to the Mackenzies' farm, and was decidedly taken aback when he answered that we were not going there at all.

"Then where are we going?" I demanded.

"Oh, the Mackenzies' 'girl' has settled to stay on, and, as Mr. Mackenzie's sister wants one, we thought you had better go there—it's all in the family."

I was not best pleased at being handed about in this way from house to house like a parcel, but apparently there was no help for it.

"And what is the name of Mr. Mackenzie's sister?" I asked, somewhat stiffly.



"Oh, she is called Anderson—that is my name," and he smiled shyly.

The truth began to dawn upon me. "Are you Mr. Anderson?" I demanded of the man whom I had taken from the first to be a farm labourer, and when he replied in the affirmative, I wondered what kind of a household was that of which he was the head.

"My wife was a dressmaker and wants to sew all day, but her sister-in-law is with us, and she would do a good bit if her baby weren't generally cross."

My heart sank. My experience of babies had not been happy so far.

"Have you any children?" and I meanly hoped for an answer in the negative.

"We have three, but only Daisy is at home all day, the other two go to school."

Three children (I knew that they would be tiresome), and a baby! Well, I was in for it, and must do the best I could. I felt from the first moment that he addressed me, that the farmer was kindly, but I could not be sure of his wife, and my fate for the next fortnight lay in her hands. Seeing that I was interested in the crops, he told me what he grew on his 640-acre section. Wheat was the great stand-by, and the most profitable, but flax, oats, and barley

were by no means to be despised. To my surprise the flax was grown entirely for the oil in its seeds, and the fibre was not used at all. The whole district was parcelled out into farms, and in many cases huge barns were in course of erection, a sure sign of prosperity. Mr. Anderson said that he had bought his land five years ago at less than twenty dollars an acre, and that now it was worth fifty; that he had paid off the borrowed capital with which he had started his venture, and that now he intended to enlarge his house, and might take a trip to England <sup>x</sup> with his family during the winter. The mosquitoes, he said, used to be a real curse at first, but they had decreased appreciably owing to the land having been brought into cultivation, and he found the weeds far more trying than the insistent gnat, as his exertions in keeping his own land clean were often rendered useless owing to the carelessness of his neighbours.

On our way we passed a long stretch of untilled prairie, flat as a billiard-table, and this had been purchased by some American speculator, who refused to sell, but let his land lie fallow, an act equivalent almost to a crime in the eyes of the farmers of the district.

It got colder as the time went on, and I wondered when we should reach our destination. At last we came to a small wooden house with various barns and

outhouses near it, a well with a lofty wind-wheel, and a general untidy look that was far from inviting. Not a word did my driver say, but I concluded that we had arrived, as a fair-haired woman wearing glasses came up to the buggy, shook hands with me and asked me to enter the house. She told me later that her husband had feared to be too explicit when he met me first, lest I should refuse to go with him if I had grasped that I was not being conveyed to the Mackenzies' farm! When Mrs. Anderson led me inside, my practised eye noted that the slip of a kitchen was very clean and neat, but it seemed terribly small when a sister-in-law, Mrs. Mackenzie, came forward, holding a sickly baby of some eight months in her arms, and three children, aged ten, eight, and five respectively, crowded round the new-comer.

“This is Maggie, who sleeps with you,” said Mrs. Anderson, as I shook hands with her eldest hope; and the announcement was a real shock, because, when I had been engaged by the other Mackenzies, I had stipulated, as I did invariably, that I should have a room to myself. I expect that I looked rather disconcerted as I inquired whether I had a separate bed, but as the answer was in the affirmative, I felt that matters might have been far worse, and followed Maggie up a narrow, wooden staircase hung with

many old clothes, through a narrow room in the pitch of the roof, to a second that lay beyond it. Here I found two pallets with a space between them, just enough to accommodate a chair, on which stood a jug and basin (welcome sight !). I found later that the mattress was merely a cotton-padded quilt, and, until I learnt how to manage them, my bed-clothes invariably slid off during the night. There was a chest-of-drawers, crammed with garments, and many dresses hanging behind it ; and I was given a couple of pegs and half the top of the drawers to use as a dressing-table. But as I had only a bag and hold-all, my wardrobe was by no means extensive, and this scanty accommodation sufficed.

I took off my coat and hat, put on a navy-blue blouse-apron, and descended, to find Mrs. Mackenzie sprinkling and folding up the clothes in readiness for the morrow's ironing ; and when Mrs. Anderson looked into the kitchen a moment later, she said, in tones of pleased surprise, " Begun to work already ? " and both women admired my " dandy " apron and wanted to take its pattern. Later on I peeled and boiled potatoes and fried steak for supper, and was helped to lay the table in the dining-room. At half-past six Mr. Anderson and two taciturn hired men made their appearance, and we sat down, a party of nine—ten, if



the baby on its mother's lap be included—and had a substantial meal, which I enjoyed, as I had had nothing since an early midday lunch. Maggie helped me with the wash-up, but, as her mother prophesied truly, she would not continue to do so for long ; and as soon as the things were packed away on the dresser-shelves, (it always seemed marvellous to me how they could ever be stowed into the limited space), I went up to bed, as I was obliged to be in the kitchen at five o'clock every morning to prepare breakfast, this being the only meal that I got ready without assistance.

Everyone was most kind to me during my time at the farm, but there were certainly some drawbacks to my new post. One was my room-companion, who was a terribly restless sleeper, often leaping about in bed during her slumbers and talking loudly. She had, moreover, a rooted objection to the open window, but on this point I was firm as adamant. The flimsy door, guiltless of any handle, burst open during the first night, and next day I had to invent a primitive fastening with string and nails in order to secure some privacy. As there was the thinnest of partitions between my room and that occupied by Mrs. Mackenzie, I was kept awake frequently by her poor baby, who would sometimes cry for an hour at a time, giving the most piercing yells. Sorry as I was for both mother



and child, yet I felt a good deal of sympathy for myself when I had to turn out morning after morning at half-past four after a disturbed night. It was quite dark before the dawn, and I lit a lamp by which to make my hurried toilette, and, carrying it, would pass through the outer room and down the narrow staircase into the kitchen. The kindly farmer would often light the fire for me; and as he brought in a pail of water the last thing at night, I had not to go to the well, and need only go outside in order to empty yesterday's ashes on to the ash-heap near at hand. If it were a porridge morning, I would fill the kettle and saucepan with water and set them to boil, while I pushed open the swing-door between kitchen and dining-room, propping it back with a brick, and carrying in plates, cups and saucers, knives, spoons, forks, and so on, to lay the table for nine people. As there was no tray in the establishment, everything had to be carried by hand, and I moved as noiselessly as possible, as Master Billy lay slumbering on the sofa, and in the room beyond, only separated by a curtain from the dining-room, was the rest of the family.

When the table was laid I had to descend into the Egyptian darkness of the basement, pulling up a trap-door and going down a breakneck staircase. Mrs. Anderson said that the man who had designed this

knew nothing about his business, and she was certainly right. The steps were all placed at unequal distances, making it most easy to lose one's footing, and various members of the family had had miraculous escapes of sudden death at one time or another. Maggie had fallen headlong, but had been caught and held suspended by a foot, and another child had been unconscious after a tumble from top to bottom. To my horror, I myself nearly caused an accident by carelessly leaving the trap-door open on my second morning, for one of the hired men, going to get a milk-pail, did not observe the abyss, and only saved himself from falling in by a timely leap.

The cellar was used as a dairy, larder, and store-room, so I had to bring up bread, butter, milk, and bacon from its depths. As soon as I had got my burdens safely into the kitchen, (I always put the lamp on the top step in order to light me during my underground gropings), it was high time to set about the breakfast proper. The porridge would be stirred into the big saucepan, bacon would be sliced into the frying-pan, (I was obliged to parboil it first with milk and then fry it, as it was too salt), the potatoes from last night had to be sliced and fried up with a little dripping, and lastly, coffee and a pinch of salt put into the big enamel pot, which I filled up with boiling water

and set upon the stove, now hot. As only coal was used in this part of the prairie, it was comparatively little trouble to keep the fire going all day; but it was not so easy to start it in the first place, and I always poured a little paraffin-oil on the bits of paper and kindling wood, using great caution, as a farmer's wife had told me of women whose faces had been terribly burnt by this practice.

About twenty minutes to six the farmer would come in with pails of milk fresh from the cow, and when he had stumbled down into the cellar with these, he would perform his ablutions in a small tin basin, which, in company with two water-pails, stood on a low cupboard in the kitchen. After he had dried his face and hands on a roller-towel hanging on the door, and had combed his hair with the aid of a tarnished little mirror, he would stand on the steps outside and yell the word "Breakfast!" in stentorian tones. This would promptly bring the two hired men, who did their wash just outside the door, but their drying and hair-combing inside. (I don't think I ever saw any man use a hair-brush all the time that I was in Canada.)

By now I would be serving out plates of porridge to master and men, carrying in the bacon and potatoes, and also, what I forgot to mention, toast browned in

the oven. The establishment did not boast of one of the excellent wire toasting implements which I saw in other places, and once I forgot this particular "chore," and burnt the bread to a cinder.

Mrs. Anderson and the elder children would begin to make their appearance, and Mrs. Mackenzie, bearing her baby, would descend into the kitchen. All washed in a very sketchy way in the little enamel basin, using the same towel, and were soon seated at the breakfast-table. Everyone ate as if engaged on a wager, never speaking a word, save perhaps to ask for something to be passed to them, and, directly they had finished, would help themselves to toothpicks, the men flinging out of the room and tramping off to their work.

To prepare a breakfast such as I have described was not altogether a light task, but when it came to having pancakes nearly every morning, my heart almost failed me. Mrs. Anderson, luckily, was one of the kindest of employers, and got up early twice to help me with their preparation, and before I left I made them as well as my mistress. On a "pancake" morning I was in the kitchen before five o'clock, as I had to make a batter of flour, buttermilk, fresh milk, and eggs, beating it up while the big girdle-iron was getting hot upon the stove. Bacon was being pre-



pared during this operation, and a syrup of brown sugar and water was being boiled up. When the batter was ready I would pour a couple of spoonfuls at intervals on the girdle-iron, which I had first smeared with dripping, smoothing the mixture into small rounds; and as soon as bubbles rose, it was time to turn them over. Each cake was turned twice, and I had to make enough to fill three or four plates, piled high. The disagreeable part of the work was the smoke that rose from the dripping on the hot girdle-iron, and that, in spite of open door and window, used to make my eyes smart and stream with involuntary tears. As soon as the pancakes were done (they ought to be eaten quite hot), everyone took them in haste, put fried bacon upon them, and poured syrup over, eating this strange mixture with the utmost relish. Being always anxious to "do at Rome as Rome does," I followed their example, and was surprised to find how good the food tasted. Certainly getting up at half-past four (there are no cups of early morning tea on the prairie in Canada!), and working at high pressure until six, would have given me an appetite for nearly any kind of food, and I have no ambition to introduce this menu at our own breakfast-table in England.

As a reward for my early rising I was often the spectator of the most glorious sunrises that I have



ever seen ; but of course I could only enjoy them in hurried snatches from the kitchen window, and had better luck with the sunsets, as they occurred at a time when there was usually a lull in the day's work.

Before I left England, a lady who had been travelling in Canada amused the guests at a tea-party by narrating that she had astonished her host and hostess of one night (who, by the way, were living in primitive style and doing all their own work), by asking for a morning bath. "None of us ever wash till four o'clock," was the answer to her demand—an answer that made us laugh, but which came home to me during my experiences as a "help," as it was the hour at which I usually made my own toilette.

Sometimes I wondered whether the farmer class ever "washed" at all, as I understood the word, and on one occasion an agreeable travelling companion horrified me by saying, "When I 'bached' I never washed my clothes—just wore them till they fell into rags." Upon an exclamation from me he amended his statement by saying, "Well, if I happened to bathe I would sometimes go in in my shirt, and then hang it out to dry in the sun."

Certainly "baching" sometimes means a good deal of dirt, and, as a woman once remarked to me of men living alone, "Scrape out the porridge-pot? Not

they. They let the dogs lick it clean to save themselves the trouble. I'm not talking through my hat—it's bare facts I'm telling you."

During my stay at the Andersons' the harvest season was in full swing. All farming folk were at work during every hour of daylight, and I was most anxious to see something of the operations by which the sheaves of corn were pitched into the "separators" and came out in streams of grain. Though there was a good deal of talk about the snapshots that I was to take with my camera, it all came to nothing, so fully occupied were we. I was surprised to hear that if winter came on before all the grain was threshed, it would be left lying under the snow until the spring, when it would not be much the worse for this long exposure.

The threshing machines were all around us, and Mr. Anderson and his brother-in-law had a big gang of men and various teams to haul the wheat to the threshers. On this occasion the men had their own cook and "caboose," in which they fed and slept; but Mr. Anderson had to provide half their food, and took milk, meat, flour, sugar, potatoes, and so on, to supply their needs. During the previous season Mrs. Anderson and her sister-in-law had undertaken the cooking themselves, and probably it was the enormous amount of work involved that had knocked my mistress up,

and had made the doctor tell her to rest as much as possible ; but this command she obeyed very imperfectly, her times of "repose" being spent chiefly at the treadle sewing-machine.

During my stay in Canada I heard a good deal about farming for women, and how they ought to take up homesteads, therefore I was interested to come across ✓ the young daughters of a neighbouring farmer, who acted as hired men to their father. Mrs. Anderson said that they rode wonderfully, could handle a team better than most men, drive the "binders," and do the whole work of a farm ; but she considered that the life they led was unsuitable for a woman, and was unfitting these girls for becoming wives and mothers in the future—in fact, the feeling of the country-side was strongly against their father. For my own part, the more I saw of farm life the less I considered it to be a suitable opening for educated girls, save in exceptional cases and for exceptional women.

On the morning of September 23rd I noticed frost-flowers on my window-panes as I dressed, and on opening the kitchen door to throw away the ashes of the stove, I found that the whole world was wrapped in snow, and looking indescribably grey and dreary. Accordingly after breakfast I donned my rubbers, (no one understands what you mean if you call them

galoshes), and made journeys to the coal-house to fill the scuttle and to the well to get water. This was always an easy matter when there was a wind, as I had only to pull down a handle to set the wind-wheel in motion, and then hang the buckets on to the pump and let them fill. When the sun got up the snow melted away, leaving the rich black loam, which makes all the farmers so prosperous, in such a sticky condition that I had to scrape it off with a knife from my foot-gear before I could enter the house, and the kitchen linoleum, which it was my daily task to wash after the midday meal, was in a terrible mess from the mud left by the men and the children.

I found my new mistress most easy to get on with. She never fussed or "hustled" me, and usually had a word of praise for my culinary operations. "I enjoy everything you cook, you do it all so daintily," was one comment that filled me with pride, and put me on my mettle to do yet better. She liked me to make English dishes, confessing that she had got tired of her own cooking and had little appetite for it, and, as she was very intelligent, we soon got to discuss all sorts of subjects if we were working together at bottling plums and peaches for the winter, or making pickles, and she expressed her wonder that I did not qualify for a school-teacher. The sister-in-law, a happy-go-



lucky Irishwoman, whose favourite expression was "For land's sake," was equally agreeable, but failed to understand how any woman could come out to Canada and not wish to marry and settle down in the country, and it was useless to assure her that I had no such intention. She tried to encourage me by saying that the farmers in this district did not care for young girls, as they considered that the older women made much better housekeepers !

"Now there is my sister," she began one day, "she was waitress at the hotel in Bridgewater, and the lady who employed her said she would make Mary acquainted with a smart young man who was doing well as a butcher. But my sister told her not to trouble, as she cared for no man and did not want to marry at all. However, when Edwin called with the meat next day, the lady shouted for Mary, who came quite innocent like into the kitchen, and was made acquainted with him then and there. He used to ask to see her when he drove his cart to the hotel, and one day he invited her to go for a drive with him. She said she wouldn't go alone, so Edwin says, 'Bring any girl you choose,' and he was so nice about it that next time she went alone with him. And now they are married, and have a house with the 'electric' and a 'phone,' and Edwin looks so well dressed and



is that particular about the way he folds his clothes (he is English and they always have so much style !). He is full of his jokes, and has lots of friends, so they see a good bit of company, and he makes my sister keep in with the newest fashions"—and Mrs. Mackenzie gave a sigh, for her husband was not "making good" at present, and she was leading a "mean" life as she expressed it. He had earned a livelihood by cutting down and selling the valuable timber on his ranch in the West, but a terrible forest fire had burnt the fine trees to the ground, and had driven him and his family forth to begin life afresh.

During my visit at the farm he was earning the high wage of five dollars (£1) a day as "separator" of a big gang of threshers, but when there was a spell of rainy weather all operations had perforce to stop, and he came to stay with his wife, receiving no pay for the days he was not working, though the farmer who employed him would have to feed the men and the teams of horses. It was a hard life when the men were in full work, as they began at five o'clock, and if the gang had to move on to another part of the neighbourhood, they would often not be in bed till midnight. Though one man affirmed that threshing was to him as the "call of the wild," it seemed a very exhausting pursuit, and Mr. Mackenzie was

always dead-tired when he came to see his wife, and spent most of his time in bed. I certainly sympathised with him, for I never got my full quantum of sleep while in the service of Mrs. Anderson, and hated X getting up at half-past four, though the splendid air warded off fatigue when I had once begun my labours.

Monday was an extra busy day, as the weekly wash had to be done as soon as the breakfast things were cleared, and the dining-room and kitchen swept out. Mrs. Anderson and I would drag the heavy washing-machine out of the coal-house into the keen air, and the boiler, full of soft water, was already on the stove with a cake of soap sliced into it. My special duty was to work the machine, which I did by pushing a handle to and fro, in order to make the clothes revolve in the soap-suds with which the big tub was filled. I had to do this for ten minutes to each relay of garments, then pass them through the wringer, after which I took them into the kitchen to be put into the boiler on the stove. From here they were soused in a tub of cold water, squeezed through the wringer, and then dipped into blue water and wrung out for the third time. Certainly the linen looked snowy white when we hung it up on the long lines, and I enjoyed working out of doors, though the wind was cold and the sun gave little warmth

here at the end of September. When the last consignments, terribly stained overalls, shirts, and socks belonging to the men, had been rocked in the water (they had to be put into the machine twice), and had been wrung and rinsed and wrung again, I felt almost as if my arms had been torn out of their sockets. We used to work from seven o'clock till half-past eleven, and then had a rush to get a midday meal of fried ham and eggs and the inevitable potatoes ready. After dinner the washing-machine was rinsed out and dragged back to the coal-house, there to rest for another week, and the wringer and washing-board went to keep it company. When a very high wind was blowing we were obliged to take down the clothes from the lines lest they should get torn, and I always had to wash over the kitchen floor before I could get upstairs at half-past two or three o'clock for a badly needed rest. At four o'clock I was down again, sprinkling and folding up the clothes in preparation for the morrow's ironing, after which there were scones and buns to be made for the half-past six supper.

I have a theory that one reason for the small amount of crime in Canada is that everyone works so hard. Satan, according to the rhyme of our childhood, occupies himself especially with the idle, and

as practically everyone is busy in the Dominion, and there is no drink to be had on the farms, all the world behaves as it should.

Of course there are exceptions to this somewhat Utopian picture.

One evening, for example, I had kept supper hot for some hours for the hired men, who had gone into the town on an errand of hauling grain, and I was anxious for them to make their appearance in order that I might clear the table and go to bed.

It was a very wet night, and when at last we heard sounds of arrival the farmer went out to investigate. It was some time before he returned, and then he came alone. "Aren't the men coming? They must be soaked, poor fellows!" I exclaimed. "Yes, they are," was his answer, "but soaked *inside*," and he smiled grimly at his small joke. "I've sent them to bed."

Certainly I hardly ever came across a "loafer"; but though work is good for all, too much of it is not so healthy. Much has been written of the charm of the prairie, and the air here was like a tonic; but, as I spent nearly all my time indoors, I did not get nearly enough of it. In fact, I loved going to the well for water, and to the coal-house to fill the scuttle, in order to drink in deep draughts of air before returning



to the hot kitchen, where, as a rule, the windows were closed out of deference to the sickly baby.

Sunday was a day when one "walked as one pleased," as Mrs. Mackenzie expressed it. Breakfast was an hour later; but as company descended upon us unexpectedly on one Sabbath, and was invited on the second, the home-help had as busy a morning as usual. This was the day on which the farmer dipped his entire head into the tin basin in the kitchen, and on my first Sunday, about half-past ten, while he was shaving and I was peeling potatoes, a buggy with a young farmer and his wife and boy drove up to the back-door, that was the only entrance to the house. They had come to dinner, and threw the whole household into a stir of preparation, though the lady adjured Mrs. Anderson to make no difference in the usual family repast on their account.

My mistress was worried about making room at the table for twelve, and accordingly I proposed that the hired men should eat with me in the kitchen. She said that even to suggest such a thing to the taciturn yokels would offend them mortally, and when a farmer's wife of her acquaintance had done it on a like occasion, it had been the talk of the whole district. Come what might, the men must be squeezed in somehow, though I said that if I had no objection

AC



to a meal in the kitchen they could hardly raise any. But they were not put to the test, and we managed all right, the "chair" question being settled by packing-cases brought up from the cellar. I sallied forth to hoe potatoes, mashing them with milk and butter, and I chopped up a raw cabbage, which made an excellent salad with a dressing; the "roast" was big enough for double the number, and Mrs. Anderson had busied herself in making "pie" the day before.

I was helped to lay the table with the best dinner-set, and "dished-up," changing the plates between the courses, handing round tea and coffee, and serving out apple-pie, with a chunk of cheese to eat with each help, eating my own meal hurriedly in the intervals of serving.

On this particular Sunday I intended to go to the weekly Methodist service in the little schoolhouse, though I was not of that persuasion myself. Mrs. Anderson wanted me to drive with the children, who had a Sunday-school class beforehand, and expressed amazement when I said that I would start an hour later and walk. "It is over a mile," she said in astonished tones, as if she were speaking of ten; and I noticed again how seldom Canadians walk, though they would think nothing of riding or driving all day.

The track I was to follow was pointed out to me,

and as I could see the top of the building across the prairie, there was no fear that I should lose my way. Accordingly Mrs. Mackenzie and I did the large dinner "wash-up" at top speed, and as I was late I set off at a brisk pace, which I was told afterwards quite surprised the men, who said that they could not have kept up with me. The trail led past a farm, and here two big collies rushed out, barking furiously, and one followed for some distance, sniffing suspiciously at my ankles. But, as I went on and pretended not to notice, I got past them safely, though I heard afterwards that that particular dog had a bad reputation for biting people.

As I got near the schoolhouse, I was overtaken by a buggy and team, and the driver leant forward and asked me to have a lift. I thanked him, but said it was hardly worth while as I was going to the service.

"So am I," he answered; "we might as well go together." And I stepped in, imagining that my new acquaintance was some prosperous farmer.

He inquired my business in these parts, and when I told him, he said that the Andersons were "fine folk." As I was always anxious to get a little information, I remarked that I was an educated woman, come out to see what openings there were in Canada, but that, as I

had no special training for anything, I could only take the post of home-help, that led to nowhere. To this he agreed, but advised me to qualify for a school-teacher or a stenographer, and by this time we had reached our destination, and I alighted, while he drove round to the back of the building to unhitch his horses. When I entered the schoolhouse, with its maps and blackboard, and sat down in company with some half-dozen men and women on the narrow little seats designed for the use of children, the Sunday school, conducted by a farmer, was in full swing, and Maggie, with conscious pride, was giving answers to nearly every question. Presently the minister made his appearance, and opened the service with a hymn, and I was surprised to see that he was my driver. He gave a most excellent sermon (I was told afterwards that he had a great reputation as a preacher), and, when the little congregation was about to disperse, he shook hands with all of us, saying a few kindly words to me. This small incident greatly interested the Anderson family, who considered that I had been highly honoured by the notice of the minister—in fact it gave me a distinct social rise.

After the service the children "hitched up," and four of us packed into the two seats of the buggy, Billy, aged eight, driving us in masterly style, urging

the horse at full speed along the rough track, and trying to race a team just behind us. This boy was typical of the youth of Canada. He chopped the kindling wood for the house, often helped me to carry the heavy pails of water from the well, or get the coal, had to turn out the cows daily and picket them in the pasture before he went off to school, and collected the eggs, that were kept during the winter embedded in oats. He could ride any horse bareback, and it was fine to see how he scrambled up, and managed the big creatures with the utmost ease, and as he always had nails in his pockets, and was as handy as a man with any little carpentering job, he was on the road to "make good" when he grew up. Moreover, he was very intelligent, and was delighted one evening when I strolled out after my day's work and pointed out the various constellations as they hung like lamps in the sapphire heaven. In his turn he bade me observe the great arc of the pulsating Northern Lights, and told me that the fires I saw in every direction were burning up huge masses of wheat-straw, a useless commodity here, where only the oat-straw is kept as it is good feed for the animals during the winter.

The speed and ease with which the average Canadian woman gets through her work, was partly



explained to me when I saw Daisy, aged five, sweep out the rooms, iron small articles quite nicely, or try her tiny hand at kneading the bread—in short, beginning at her early age the proverbial “practice that makes perfect.”

Unfortunately, all the children were rude and mannerless—such a contrast to their polite parents and aunt. At meals they shouted their loudest for “Meat !” “Cake !” or “Sauce !” (by this latter they meant fruit preserved in syrup which we often had for supper), and no one reproved them for their lack of courtesy. They were also very greedy, and if they considered anything to be “terrible nice” or “terrible good,” they would take far more on to their plates than they could possibly eat, and little Daisy was munching something or other all day long. As I was brought up on the principle of “nothing between meals,” it surprised me to observe their frequent visits to the cupboards or cellar to get buns, scones, or fruit, and I was sometimes annoyed, as they would gobble up my choicest efforts in this line, a large cake seldom sufficing for more than one meal owing to their depredations. Indigestion, according to the advertisements, and according to what I heard and saw, appears to be one of the staple complaints of the Dominion, and I should think that this indis-



criminate eating must have much to do with it. If the children were not eating they were chewing "gum," and this habit prevails throughout the whole country, young and old being apparently equally addicted to it. At first I imagined that the people were not "through" with their meals, as the jaws of hotel managers, whom you approached on the question of rooms, were working busily, and the habit only added to the impression I gained that there is little repose in Canada. The nation is a "live wire," as a man expressed it to me, and the climate induces a ceaseless energy, though I fancy that it must wear people out by over-stimulating them.

Certainly I could never have done in England half of what I accomplished in Canada; but when I reached the Pacific Coast, my energy partially deserted me for the time, and I felt as though I could have slept all day long.

Up to now I had experienced for the most part superb weather on the prairie, a brilliant sunshine that glorified the mean outhouses and touched the miles of wheat lying cut on every side with gold, and a clear atmosphere in which we could see objects distinctly at long distances across the vast plain.

But suddenly all this was changed, the rain fell in torrents, and I had a period of acute discomfort.

It had been a wild night of storm and wind, and when I got into the kitchen at five o'clock one morning, I found that the coal-scuttle was nearly empty. Fortunately, I had carried my rain-coat and rubbers down with me as I left my bedroom, and I sallied forth to the coal-house that was quite close. The ground resembled the clay loam on a ploughed field in England after several days of rain, and I had difficulty in keeping on my galoshes even for that short distance. After the breakfast wash-up I had to go to the well, which was a little distance from the house, and as the horses and cows drank from big tubs close beside it, the earth was trampled into a regular morass, in which my rubbers stuck fast and could not be kept on my boots. I staggered back to the house with one pail at a time, and, with the aid of an old knife, got rid of some of the mud that I was carrying on my feet and that felt as heavy as lead. The howling wind, the beating rain, and my load all combined, made me thankful to feel that I was only playing at being a home-help and was not forced to lead the life in reality. Directly I had got my pails to the kitchen door and given them to Mrs. Mackenzie, I had another journey in the mud to fill the coal-scuttle (would that it had been bigger!), and to procure salt from a little sack that was kept

in the coal-house. Then a longer tramp to the clothes-lines to unpeg and bring in a quantity of garments that had been left out during the night, in the vain hope that, as it had rained the day before, it would have been fine the next day.

After this I returned to the house, which was only twenty-eight feet by sixteen, and had the merest slip of a kitchen. So small was it that it was hard for two people to pass one another in the narrow space between the stove and the table, and anyone coming from the upstairs bedrooms had to open the door at the foot of the staircase most cautiously, lest it should knock some one, while the doors of the china cupboard, if open, would fly in the face of anyone entering the kitchen from the dining-room. The window, controlled by means of a stick, opened the whole top-half or not at all, and as everyone objected to the rain beating in in wet weather, or complained of the cold, or said that the stove would never heat properly if the fresh air blew upon it, or believed that the puny baby would catch a chill, the net result was a stifling atmosphere, and I always felt that we were only saved from suffocation by a big crack under the outer door !

In this room we three women worked during a good part of each day ; here the baby sat in her chair with

many a scream, in spite of protests on my part as to the unhealthy way in which she was being brought up, and here the three children wandered in and out all day long when it was too wet for them to go to school. Every entrance into the house, or exit from it, was accompanied by a loud bang of the wire-gauze screen-door; the noise and movement were perpetual; and yet, wonderful as it may seem, I never heard a cross word exchanged among the grown-ups, though the children were very far from following the excellent example set them by their elders.

On the particular afternoon about which I am writing, I had to remove the stems and cut in halves hundreds of crab-apples that Mrs. Anderson was going to make into jelly, and Billy, the nicest of the juvenile trio, announced that he would help me. So we got to work, and I narrated incidents to him of the siege of Troy, and as many of the adventures of much-travelled Ulysses as I could remember. Maggie volunteered her assistance in order to listen, and Mrs. Anderson brought her dressmaking to the dining-room table, round which we were sitting. At last the hero returned to Ithaca, his faithful dog had recognised its master and died, and when Ulysses had drawn his mighty bow and slain the suitors, I paused for lack of further matter. Billy, who had listened

spellbound, heaved a deep sigh of pleasure, and I felt well rewarded when he remarked, "That is just the kind of story that I like!"

The bad weather made me ask Mrs. Anderson about the winter months, and I inquired whether the windows were ever opened when the snow lay on the ground.

"Not when it is very cold, and we often get fifty-six degrees of frost."

A vision rose in my mind of the furnace in the dining-room and the stove in the kitchen burning all day and several hours of each night, and never a breath of fresh air in an atmosphere that would half kill me!

I asked my employer what social distractions there were, as the farms about here were comparatively close to one another. She said that in the summer there was nothing, as the work of farming went on at high pressure from April right into October, and there was no time for amusement. In the winter there were a few dances, but, as the farms were so small and most of the neighbours poor, they had not many of these. The chief recreation seemed to be "socials" in the schoolhouse. Each woman would bring a basket, in which she had put up a dinner for two, and her name was inside out of sight. All the baskets were held up to auction, and there was much



fun as the men bid against one another for them. Then the winners of each basket found out to whom it belonged, and he and she sat at one of the uncomfortable little school-desks and ate the food together, the money going to some charitable object.

To vary this, the ladies would stand behind a sheet, and the men bid for these "ghosts," as they called them. As women were in the minority, little school-girls also acted as "ghosts," but these stood on boxes, as the men would not have cared to buy them had they suspected their youth, for "they all want young ladies," as Mrs. Anderson expressed it.

When all the "ghosts" were bought, they emerged with numbers pinned on to them, and, bearing their baskets, they shared the contents with their purchasers. The entertainment was concluded with music and recitations, and Mrs. Anderson begged me to stay on for the winter, as she thought that I might help in these diversions.

Now and again there were the "surprise" parties about which most of us have heard. The woman thus honoured was usually inveighed from her home for a few hours, and returned to find a troop of neighbours in possession of the house, and her table spread with the eatables they had brought. After a hearty meal, dancing would take place; but in the kitchen, with

the stove in full blast, the dancers got far hotter than was at all comfortable, and must afterwards drive home in a temperature below zero, a dangerous proceeding.

Mrs. Anderson told me that when she gave a party at Christmas, some of the guests lost their way in the snow while returning to their homes, and during the winter the blizzards were so bad that the school had to be closed for a month. The silent Mr. Anderson, at the mention of the word blizzard, suddenly burst into speech, and related how he had got caught in one coming home from the town. The air was filled with snow, fine as flour, a cruel wind was blowing, and about three miles from home he lost his way completely. But a dog from a neighbouring farm had followed his buggy from the town, and at this point the intelligent animal, which appeared to grasp the situation, ran on ahead barking to him, and running back at intervals as if to direct him. The horses appeared to be as much at a loss as the farmer, but the latter followed the dog blindly, and is sure that he could never have reached his home without its aid, and might have perished in the snow. These blizzards are terrible; men have been known to lose their way between the house and the barn, and have wandered on and on until they have succumbed

to the cold, and their bodies have not been recovered until the spring sunshine has melted the snow away. Mrs. Anderson said that sometimes she could not leave the house for days at a time, and that she got to hate the monotony of the great wastes of snow all around her.

Tastes certainly differ, but for my part I felt thankful that I was not called upon to spend my life upon a Canadian farm. There would be too little "call of the prairie" and too much "call of the kitchen" for me, too much work and too little relaxation. On Tuesdays, for example, I had to iron three to four hours on end, and my back seemed broken when I had at last smoothed out the extensive family wash. Moreover, every three or four days there was churning to be done, and a heavy barrel of cream had to be made to revolve by means of a foot-treadle and a handle. Once or twice Mrs. Anderson did not trouble to get the cream up to the right temperature before she set me to work, and the result was an hour's hard labour before the little round of glass at one end of the barrel was clear, showing that the butter had formed, and on one occasion a swollen knee, which made me feel extra nervous in negotiating the breakneck cellar steps. To be a home-help on the prairie would, as a rule, have little attraction for an educated English-

woman, and she would greatly feel the lack of social intercourse, the want of books and congenial companionship, unless she had the good fortune to be with people of her own class, in which case it would be very different.

At last the day of my departure arrived, and I was glad to be leaving, though I was not ungrateful for all the kindness that I had received. As I turned out of bed at half-past four, I felt thankful that it was the last time that I should have to make pancakes in floods of tears! Mrs. Anderson offered me a dollar over and above my wages (I refused it with thanks, though highly gratified at this recognition of the worth of my services), and she said that she had much enjoyed my company and would miss me, while Mrs. Mackenzie, to whom I had bequeathed my "dandy" aprons and various other extremely shabby belongings, presented me with a keepsake of her own handiwork, begging me to write to her, and both united in hoping that I should get home safely to England. At seven o'clock the farmer brought his buggy round, my belongings were hoisted in, and I was driven off amid warm farewells from the women and children. I felt half ashamed of myself for feeling so delighted to be leaving them all, but the life was by now becoming intolerable to me,



and I could hardly have stood another week of it. I had felt like a prisoner cooped up in the little house, and now I was my own mistress again, and would have a room to myself where I could shut the door and be quite alone. This seemed the height of luxury after enduring such a restless room-mate as Maggie had proved herself to be.

It was a lovely morning, and Mr. Anderson drove across the short grass of the prairie, keeping clear of the road that was like a wet ploughed field, and even winding his way in and out among the sheaves of corn in order to avoid the trail. I did not quite appreciate his tactics until we were forced to cross the highway, and in a moment the wheels were embedded in the sticky mud, and the poor horse stopped in mute protest at having to drag such an unexpected weight, but the earth fell off in lumps as soon as we got on to the grass again.

The farmer said that he could not begin "seeding" (*i.e.* sowing the wheat) until the middle of April, as the frost was not out of the ground before then. During the winter there were the animals to be fed, and always something to be done on the farm when the weather was not too bad, while there was grain to be hauled if the snow permitted. As we got near the little prairie town, fences made their appearance



on either side of us, and we were forced to take to the road. We toiled along at a foot's pace, and the horse rested at intervals, and though we had driven only twelve miles, yet we had taken three solid hours in which to reach the station, and should have been treble the time if we had not had so many stretches of prairie, which helped us greatly. The farmer drove me up to the little scarlet-painted dépôt and handed out my belongings, and then we shook hands warmly. He was essentially a man of deeds and not of words, and had shown me various little kindnesses, beside the much appreciated one of lighting the stove in the mornings, and I felt that we parted with a mutual liking and sympathy.

## CHAPTER XIV

### EASTWARDS AND HOMEWARDS

My six months' tour was coming to an end, and I was soon to leave the Dominion, poorer in purse though richer in experience. Certainly the hotels are expensive, and though the best ones are fitted up with every luxury, yet you have to look after yourself in many ways. For instance, there is a telephone in each bedroom, by means of which all orders are given. If there is no bathroom attached to your bedroom, you "phone" for the bell-boy to bring you up the key of the public one. No chambermaid carries hot water to you in the mornings and you must wake yourself, unless you happen to be leaving the hotel by an early train. In that case you mention, at the office the night before, the time at which you wish to be awakened, and at the hour you are roused from your slumbers by the telephone bell, that rings without ceasing until you call down the tube. A custom that is pleasanter for the employees than for travellers, is that, in the hotels run Canadian fashion, it is impossible to get any food either before or after

stated hours. Often if I were obliged to make an early start I could get no breakfast, and in one frequented hotel the doors of the dining-room were shut at a quarter to eight o'clock in the evening, which caused some hardship during the tourist season when all the trains were late, no expostulations being of the least avail. A friend came to see me when I was staying at one place, and as it was four o'clock I asked a waiter to bring tea, and was taken aback when a voice called out from the office: "No teas are served in this hotel."

The Western hotels are usually run *en pension*, which entitles the traveller to order as much as he chooses from a long menu, the three meals having a considerable resemblance to one another, as tea and coffee, bread and butter (the latter a pat on a little plate), are served at each, and I greatly missed fresh vegetables, the price of the latter rendering them almost prohibitive.

I found that laundry-work was at a premium. My under-linen was of the plainest, yet at Vancouver I paid eight shillings on one occasion for seven articles that required no starching or "getting up," and these prices forced me to wash my own handkerchiefs, plastering them, when damp, on mirrors or window-panes, a method that answered almost as well as ironing them. In hotels, where hot and cold water was laid

on in the bedrooms, there were always notices forbidding the washing of clothes in the marble basins, but I fancy that few Canadian women would attend to this regulation, and most of them carry about an electric iron in order to press out their blouses and cotton dresses. Chinamen seem to "run" the majority of the laundries out West, but I was told that their methods do not commend themselves to all. For one thing they are supposed to use the minimum of water in their cleansing operations, and for another they are said, when ironing, to spray the garments with water ejected from their mouths!

As for boot-blackening, I carried a Nugget outfit and did my own, as I had no fancy for sitting on the high chairs in the "shine parlours" that seem to be frequented by men alone. No one, of course, would dream of placing his boots outside his bedroom door at night if he wished to see them again.

I constantly compared the prices of clothes in the shops with those in England, and came to the conclusion that cotton dresses, blouses, and under-clothing were about the same, but that serges, tweeds, woollen underwear, and boots were far dearer. An Englishwoman, living in Vancouver, said that she had to pay £10 for a ready-made coat and skirt that she could have got for £4 in England, that the boots advertised to "trip out" at one and a half dollars

had no wear in them, and she pointed out to me that such things as newspapers, car fares, reels of cotton, pencils, and so on were all  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  in the West instead of  $1d.$  as in the Old Country; in fact, I became so accustomed to consider the five-cent bit as the lowest coin in circulation, that I was quite puzzled to be given copper coins, one or two cents in value, when I got east of Winnipeg.

Though "quick lunches" are advertised at  $1s.$ , yet, on the whole, living is dear in the West, a fact to be taken into account by girls who may have to wait before getting work to their taste. An English lady, who earned her livelihood by supplying offices with soap and towels, mirrors and whisks, told me that she could not be comfortably lodged and boarded at less than  $\pounds 8$  a month, and often paid  $\pounds 9$ ; while a friend, working as a stenographer, paid  $17s.$  a week for her room, which was the smallest in the "rooming" house, and her expenses came to over  $\pounds 9$  a month, a sum that ate up the lion's share of her salary. She had tried going in for cheap meals, but found that she must pay  $1s. 5d.$  in order to get decent food; and she invariably made her own breakfast, and did all her laundry-work in the marble basin in her room with hot and cold water laid on, drying her clothes at the window in summer, and on the radiator in winter, and ironing them with an electric iron.



Of course things would be much cheaper in Montreal or Toronto, but salaries would be lower in proportion.

These "rooming" houses, owing to the lack of women's hostels, are greatly patronised by girls, and it is a good plan for a couple of friends to share a room; but it is a lonely life for a solitary woman, as the tenant is cut off absolutely from the family life of the house. She may not even enter the kitchen, and, as one girl remarked to me, "I might be ill, or dead, and no one would think of coming near me perhaps for days."

It is, moreover, hard to have to go out in all weathers to the restaurants for meals, and the Y.W.C.A. in each big town is indeed a boon to the working woman. Being partly supported by charity, it only charges about £1 a week for board and lodging. Its rooms are always full, and at meal-times its tables are crowded with girls who come in for their food, and thus get companionship and probably make friendships. In town after town I tried in vain to get a bed at the Y.W.C.A., and my nearest approach to this was the offer of the sitting-room sofa on one occasion. But this was speedily taken from me owing to the arrival of a sickly-looking girl, evidently in trouble, upon which the matron said, that as I appeared to be so strong, would I mind giving up the sofa and getting a lodging elsewhere. The women's hostels,

subsidised by Government, charge about the same rates as the Y.W.C.A., but unluckily there are not nearly enough of these most useful institutions.

I was told that if girls would club together, they could hire an unfurnished flat with four bedrooms and a bathroom at about £7 a month. In this case they would buy some second-hand furniture, cook their own meals, and could live cheaper than in any boarding-house. But, of course, this plan would be hardly practicable for a new-comer.

I got to know a young Canadian stenographer, who used to come in for her meals at a women's hostel, and sat next to me at table. Apparently she had a very easy time at her office, her employer often ordering in ice-creams, "soft" drinks, and chocolates, of which she would partake during business hours; but, despite these attractions, she was hesitating whether she would not transfer her services to another office belonging to some "real estate" agent, who, she assured me, was deeply in love with her. She was not quite certain whether this would be a desirable arrangement, and in the frankest manner asked for my opinion. This I gave in such an uncompromising fashion, that it helped to turn the balance in the direction that she herself really saw was the right one. She and the "chum" who shared her room were quite nice girls, and would, I was

x convinced, steer clear of the dangers that lie in wait for women who earn their livelihood—in fact, the system of co-education helps girls greatly when they go into business. It enables them to compete with men, to stand up for themselves, and to value their own work, for in many cases the weaker sex wins all the prizes at school, and is far “smarter” than the boys. But an acute observer told me that though the sense of comradeship thus engendered was a great safeguard, yet the system was apt to destroy idealism in love and marriage, and in many cases tended to make the boys effeminate.

In Western Canada, where men are so much in the majority, girls can easily have a good time, but the free confidences of my young acquaintances made me wish to protect their admirers. I remarked that motor drives lasting for many hours, dinners at hotels, theatrical entertainments, and so on were not to be got for nothing, and surprised them by pointing out that debt, followed by embezzlement, might be the result of these costly outings to their “particular friends,” as they called them.

I have been frequently asked concerning the climate of Canada, but it is difficult to dogmatise about a huge Continent in which thirty United Kingdoms or eighteen Germanys could be packed. From all I heard, I should judge that British Columbia had a

magnificent climate; Vancouver Island is free of the rainy season that visits Vancouver, and the winters on the whole Pacific slope are mild, not unlike those of Devonshire, I was told. Farther inland there is snow and frost, yet the cold is seldom severe, and is comparatively short-lived.

East of the Rockies it is different, and an Englishman said that, when a new-comer in Alberta, he had had his hands and feet frost-bitten, and even his nose had not escaped—in fact, when working in the open during the winter it was necessary to rub the face with snow constantly in order to escape this danger.

The snow lies for several months on end, except in the districts visited by the balmy Chinook wind, and a woman whom I met in the train told me a pathetic tale of a young child who strayed out-of-doors during a snowstorm, and, in spite of the frenzied search made by its parents, the little body was only found when the snow melted in the spring. Here is an extract from a letter written by an Englishwoman, a widow, farming in North Alberta, dated November 16, 1911:

“The weather is *bitter* for five to seven months of the year. In winter I am up at 5.30 A.M., and try to get the house above zero, and the food thawed out and eatable, and the creatures fed. This year our crop was badly frosted, and the prices offered for it



so low that the expenses are higher than the income from it. Our potatoes and crop of garden vegetables were frozen in the ground, and are under six inches of snow as well, and will only do as pig-feed in the spring.

"We are told that it pays better to use all our frozen grain as *feed*, and convert it into beef and pork and poultry, instead of selling it at such low prices. As I write to-day, it is 27 degrees below zero, and a cruel wind blowing, but we must make the best of it." . . .

Yet, to counterbalance this picture, I heard again and again that though the thermometer is low, yet the sun, as a rule, shines brilliantly, and the buoyant air fills one and all with vitality, new-comers, curiously enough, seldom feeling the cold at first, and often hardly wrapping up until they have been a year or two in the country. Indeed, many prefer the cold to the somewhat enervating climate on the Pacific slope, a Lotus-land where I could have slept away half my days. But it is a useful rest cure, for while I was at Vancouver I met several ladies who had come from Alberta, and they said that they got so strung up with the high altitude and the tonic air of their own homes that an annual visit to the coast was imperatively necessary for them. As one lady put it, "I am wound up like a mechanical toy, and feel that I am going on and on, and can't stop myself



if I try—I can't even sleep—so I come here, and then the whole thing runs down of its own accord at once, and my nerves get all right again."

On my way back to the Atlantic I had many an interesting talk with fellow-passengers. I was on one occasion, in a dining-car in British Columbia, placed opposite a young man, who looked like a navvy in his costume of an old red jersey and a dark-blue flannel shirt. In appearance he was far from being an ideal table-companion, but when I ventured on some remark I found that I was much mistaken. My acquaintance turned out to be a forest surveyor, an enthusiastic lover of the romantic scenery through which we were passing, and he told me much of the lore of the woods, his talk reminding me of *The Blazed Trail*, that fascinating epic of the lumber-trade. He was an ardent admirer of the *Songs of a Sour-dough*, and explained how "the wilds where the caribou call" had laid their spell upon him, unfitting him for the life of towns; and I, in my turn, begged him to read Kipling's haunting "Feet of the Young Men."

Another table-companion, an Englishman in the prime of life, interested me by recounting how he had "made good" in the Dominion. At first he had turned his hand to everything, had been employed in road-making, had worked on the railway, and so on. But all the time he was keenly noting the possibilities

in the country of his adoption, and putting his earnings into well-selected building lots that were humanly certain to rise in value as the city prospered and expanded. As a result, he had built up a big business by his own unaided exertions, his special "chum" in those early days sitting at present in the Dominion Parliament. Englishman though he is, he regretfully owned that he had tried again and again to employ his countrymen in his office, but that he was forced to dismiss them owing to their lack of adaptability. In fact, so depressed did I become at this almost universal charge, that I felt cheered when a Canadian woman remarked, "At first, when Englishmen tried to get into my husband's office, he used to turn them all down, but now he hasn't a single Canadian there." I inquired the reason of this, but her answer was not exactly encouraging. "Oh, it's just because the Canadians won't stay anywhere; they are always on the lookout for something better, but the British want to settle down and not be for ever on the hustle."<sup>1</sup>

Once when I went into a large church, the Englishman employed in looking after it came up with a smile to show me its beauties, and soon told me about

<sup>1</sup> These remarks do not apply to the educated Englishwoman who, if capable, is welcomed everywhere, and my successful compatriot said that his head stenographer was of that class. "She draws 125 dollars a month (£25), a good salary, but she is worth every cent of the money," was his comment upon this lady.

himself. He said that he had come from a big manufacturing town, lured by the glowing account of the well-paid work to be had for the asking in the Dominion. At first he was sadly disillusioned, one of his worst experiences being the life in a construction camp with Armenians of indescribable dirtiness, who did not know a word of English. After this he was a fireman, and had the ill-luck to be in Toronto at the time of the "slump" caused by the American bank failures.

During that distressing period there were actually advertisements in the papers from men offering money to anyone who would give them work, and he himself was reduced to becoming a dish-washer in a restaurant, which, as he expressed it, was "the limit." "Now," he concluded, "I have got into 'Easy Street,' and I always give any jobs I can to the English, but they won't fit in with the country—the Scotch and Irish are much better. I give the church cleaning to a man who came out with his wife and children and didn't know where to turn for a meal, and he's always on the grumble. Only the other day I asked his wife to help with the big church lunches, and she actually refused, as the work would be beneath her! What do you say to that for a woman who was nearly a beggar a few months back? It makes me tired to think of her." With the remembrance of his own struggle with Fate fresh in his mind, my friend said that he

thought that Canada was a far easier land for a woman than for a man, if the former had only pluck. "There are any amount of soft jobs for a girl. Why, she can always be a waitress ; that's easy enough."

I did not agree with him in this, for unless a woman has plenty of physical strength and a steady nerve, she will find Canada a ruthless country, with few helping hands to aid her.

As I made my way East I halted for a day or two at those prosperous twin-cities, Fort William and Port Arthur, situated on beautiful Lake Superior, and my Canadian authoress having written about me to various of her friends, some of the ladies arranged a meeting, at which I spoke to them about my work. A lady journalist who was present, rather surprised me by saying that what had struck her most on a recent visit to England was the profound ignorance, coupled with indifference, of the British as regarded conditions of life in Canada. This attitude is a pity, and accounts for some of the antagonism that occasionally crops up. An Englishman, who had been many years in the Dominion, told me that if his Canadian friends sneered at the British, he said that the latter *were* different, owing to the great heritage that they had received from the past. He himself could not overestimate the influence that Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, or the Tower had had on him as



a boy, an influence making for culture and the pursuit of the ideal. "In my small way," he concluded, "I uphold the Flag in the town where I live, and now and then am able to do a bit of quiet work for the Old Country." He was interested in the idea of helping educated women to settle in Canada, grasping at once that their presence might become a power for good in welding the nations more closely together.

Certainly Canada is, at least in the West, so new, so much on the make, that men are apt to put their entire energies into the business of money-making. The miles of corn, the great forests, the mineral wealth, practically untouched as yet—everything so vast, opportunities so immense, the splendid climate, the very optimism of the race, all seem to be added temptations to materialism. But the women are different. Busy as they are, most of them insist on having some culture in their lives, and thousands, by enrolling themselves as "Daughters of the Empire," uphold patriotism, and never allow the Flag to be spoken of lightly in their hearing. I was told that when the Reciprocity Agreement was the burning question of the hour, the women threw themselves into politics as never before, because they believed that the question was an Imperial one. Throughout Canada there are branches of the "Women's Auxiliary," a society that, as far as I could gather, does



the work of many charitable organisations rolled into one. When I went to Toronto I had the privilege of addressing a crowded meeting of this society, assembled to discuss missionary matters, the secretary having most kindly proposed that I should try and interest the audience in the objects of my journey, if I could do so in the space of five minutes. I did my best to explain them, but certainly got more information than I gave, as various ladies spoke to me afterwards on the subject of openings for educated women in the Eastern cities.

During my visit I went to see the comfortable women's hostel, a boon indeed to girls in search of work. Two big parties, sent out by the British Women's Emigration Society, had just arrived from England, the members of which were given board and lodging free for twenty-four hours, as the Home has a Government grant, and the whole house was crowded with servant girls and ladies wishing to engage them as domestics. How one hoped that all these young things would succeed in the Dominion! As each girl was suited, she came, often with tears standing in her eyes, to bid good-bye to the kind Superintendent who has done so much for British women in Canada, and I understood that the last link with "Home" was now being broken, that farewells had been said to the companions of the long journey, and that the girl

was entering on a new life. It lay with her whether she was to be a success or a failure, and much would depend on whether she were adaptable or not.

There are few specialists in the domestic line in Canada; a girl will have as a rule to do the work of a general servant, and probably be expected to turn her hand to odd jobs that do not fall to the lot of even the maid-of-all-work in England. Though the wages are high, yet the work is hard in proportion, and two friends of mine whose servants have left to seek their fortunes in the Dominion, have received letters, in each of which was the significant phrase—"I lived like a lady when I was with you and didn't know what real work meant."

I also spent a most interesting day at the Guelph Agricultural College, travelling through charming scenery, gorgeous in October trappings of gold and scarlet. It was very hot; as usual the windows of the crowded carriage were shut, and when I shoved mine up from the bottom (none open from the top), I found that the catch did not work, the window in consequence refusing to stay open. An elderly Canadian farmer kindly sacrificed a pencil to act as a prop, and we were soon engaged on the Reciprocity question. His ire had been strongly aroused by the party that had taken "British born" for its election cry, and he remarked that, as we all belonged to the same Empire,

such a feeling only caused friction and disruption. This was by no means the first time that Canadians had commented to me about this party-cry, so sadly at variance with Lord Grey's fine motto: "I live in the Empire, but Canada is my Home."

When my friend left, his place was taken by a man as averse to Reciprocity as the other was for it. He lived at London, Ontario, where the river Thames is crossed by Blackfriars Bridge, and where the streets are called by the familiar names of Piccadilly, Regent Street, and so on. I was quite sorry when I reached the junction where I had to change, and my new acquaintance helped me and my belongings out of the car, saying, as we shook hands, that he hoped to see the original London some day. At Guelph, a well-built and prettily situated town, I took a tram to the College, set out in its large grounds, and was hospitably received by the wife of the Principal (her husband was away for the day), and by the lady President of the Macdonald Institute, where the women students reside and are instructed. When I was taken over this latter, and saw the charming rooms where the students live, the fine dining-hall, gymnasium, and public sitting-rooms, I felt that Canadian girls owe a big debt of gratitude to the generous donor. In another building were the class-rooms, and here I saw a laundry equipped with wash-tubs and wringers

worked by electricity, where the water was for ever on the boil, and where rows of clothes were hanging in hot cupboards to dry them. Such luxury reminded me of a recent experience of mine on the prairie, when floods of rain had induced us to leave the clothes hanging on the line during the night, the result being that they were found frozen stiff the next day, and had to be washed again to the accompaniment of a piercing wind.

In this laundry were also wash-tubs and wringers such as are in use on every prairie farm, and, in the beautifully arranged and spotlessly clean kitchens, the *batterie de cuisine* was just what the girls would have at their own homes, every effort being made to ensure that the training is thoroughly practical. Cards of instruction hung on the walls, and I perused the one treating of dish-washing with especial interest. Sewing, dressmaking, and millinery are taught, in fact everything to make a girl a good housekeeper, and I only wished that I could have entered for a course myself six months earlier. Later on I was taken over the poultry farm and saw the dairy-work. This is in the men's part, but women are allowed to take a month's course in the rearing of fowls and the making of butter and cheese. Everybody was most kind to the inquiring stranger, and I thoroughly enjoyed my day, one of the last spent in the Land of the Maple Leaf, for it was



well into October and time for me to be returning home.

I had been since the end of April in Canada, and had tried never to lose sight of the fact that I was in the country to investigate what it offered to the educated British woman, and now I had come to certain conclusions which I will sum up shortly.

The quality that spells success in Canada is *efficiency*, and if that is allied to an energetic, adaptable nature possessing some business capacity, its possessor will without fail "make good."

Canadians are so capable themselves that there is no room in the country for the amateur, "unskilled labour," save in the kitchen, being even more at a discount here than it is in Great Britain.

The British woman who comes out well equipped with something that the Dominion needs may very likely have to "start in" at the bottom and work her way up, for she is beginning her life across the Atlantic under entirely different conditions to those that prevail in the Old Country. But, to counterbalance this, the girl who is dependent on her earnings is not looked down upon socially, except, perhaps if she be home-help in a town. "We despise people out here if they won't work," were the words of a cultivated English woman in the Far West, and the bracing climate is of marvellous assistance in inducing energy and optimism. In Great Britain there are over a million more



women than men; in Canada, west of Winnipeg, I am told that there are about a dozen men to every woman, therefore the field for feminine work is immense. Life in the "Golden West" may be devoid of many of the comforts that we in the United Kingdom have come to look upon as necessities, but it offers opportunities that are not to be found in the crowded British Isles. In the words of a travelling acquaintance, "In England, whenever there is a good post, there are hundreds after it, but out here there may be only one woman capable of filling it."

One of the heads of the Emigration Department, in speaking about the objects of the League, said of the British woman of to-day, "The stock is all right, but the *training* is all wrong," and his words are well worth considering.

But though efficiency is so important, yet character perhaps counts for more in Canada than in the British Isles; and the most highly trained girl, if devoid of energy and resource, might very possibly go to the wall in a land where all must fend for themselves.

I shall be richly rewarded if this book, in which I have tried to portray things exactly as I saw them, makes some of my sisters realise the importance of becoming experts instead of being amateurs; and though I trust that the unfit, such as I was, may be discouraged from trying their fortune in the Dominion, yet I hope that what I have written may be useful to

the right type of woman, who cannot see her way to earning a livelihood and providing for her o'd age in England. In weighing the "pros" and "cons" of settling in Canada, she ought to take into consideration what kind of a future will probably be hers if she remains at home.

We hear so much talk nowadays about the "superfluous woman," that surely, rather than be included in that depressing category, it would be well worth a girl's while to put up with some discomfort and toil in the Dominion, where she is badly needed, and where, if of the right type, she will in all likelihood succeed beyond her anticipations.

✱ I consider that it is an Imperial work to help girls of a high stamp to seek their fortunes beyond the seas—women who will care for our glorious Flag and what it signifies, who will stand for higher ideals than the worship of the "almighty dollar," and who will do their part in the land that their brothers are developing so splendidly.

It is not too much to say that a British woman, worthy of her great heritage, can, in Mr. Chamberlain's unforgettable words, be in very deed a "missionary of Empire."





**PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET**

---

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY**

---



